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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE PLAYER CHARACTER IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA

BY



JUDITH WARNER FISHER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE PLAYER CHARACTER IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA submitted by JUDITH WARNER FISHER in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of the player as a character type in the English Renaissance drama. The Prologue examines the criteria used in the Renaissance for judging fictional characters and in what way the playwrights used such criteria. The thesis is divided into three main sections: *Players, Playing, and Purpose*. The social and theatrical background of the players--professional, amateur, and boys--is examined using contemporary documents and the plays themselves in the 'Players' section. An examination of the argument about whether the Renaissance acting style was natural or formal is headed 'Acting: Technique and Presentation.' The settings, costumes, and make-up for the players' performances are discussed in 'Staging' and the relationship between the player and the audience both in the plays and in the playhouses themselves is examined in the section called 'Audience.' Both the players' and the playwrights' purpose is discussed in the third section, which deals mainly with the role or function of the player character in the plays. The Epilogue concludes my thesis that the player character holds, "as 'twere, the mirror up to nature," and his reflection as a type is as ambiguous and indistinct as the real player whom he imitates.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- EES Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages, 1300-1660. 3 vols.
(Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).
- ES E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage. 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1923).

PROLOGUE

The actors are come hither, my lord. (Hamlet II.ii)

This thesis is an examination of the player character and his role as a character type in the English drama of the late 1500s and early 1600s. The consideration of whether there are any typical characteristics which denote a player or his role includes discussion of both acting techniques and the player's relationship with his audience and the playwright. I suggest that the role of the player, amateur or professional, on-stage accurately represents his role, off-stage, in society. He holds, "as 'twere, the mirror up to nature" (Hamlet III.ii.22).¹

The dramatic image we see of the player and his role in society is as nebulous and precarious as his actual image. The men and boys who were players (women were not included in the acting companies) came from various classes of society to join a profession or trade which had no established guild. They were craftsmen working at a socially traditional yet legally unrecognized craft. Those players who were not under the protection of a patron and in the service of an 'honourable personage' were exposed to the risk of punishment as vagabonds. Even after 1576, when the first London theatre opened and the player could establish himself in a permanent playing place, in a profession "in which money might with reasonable safety be invested" (ES 1: 309) and profits anticipated, the player's ambiguous role in society did not radically change. He might be a gentleman with a coat-of-arms yet he still carried the 'rogue and vagabond' stigma attached to his profession.

The playwrights who worked for and with the players depict in the plays not only the ambiguity of the player's social role but also his

artistic role. The playwrights defend the art of acting and the moral value of drama while, at the same time, they portray player characters who usually have no sense of decorum. Madeleine Doran tells us that "the critical standard of the Renaissance . . . in creating or judging a fictitious character" was verisimilitude (which in the Renaissance meant not naturalism but an ideal or universal truth) and "the standard of judgment about what was verisimilar was decorum, or the doctrine of appropriateness. Speech and behavior must be appropriate to the person, the place, the time, the circumstance, the end or purpose" (217). Lise-Lone Marker believes that the "Elizabethan actor, belonging to a dramatic tradition that recognized and adhered to the ideal of decorum, was trained in the depiction of characters delineated by appropriate, identifying characteristics and behaviour" (91). But the player characters as depicted by the Renaissance playwrights show no identifying characteristics or behaviour common to all actors nor is their speech or behaviour always appropriate to the person or role they play, or to the place, the time, the circumstance, and the purpose of their playing. However, the player characters do represent the players as they really were: the good and bad, the professional and amateur, the men and boys. It is the variety of player-types and the variety of playing techniques which the Renaissance playwrights depict in the drama.

It is my belief that the players of the Renaissance were no more members of a particular social class than actors are today and the player character in the Renaissance drama, whether professional or amateur, adult or boy, is as hard to characterize or type-cast as his actual counterpart.

PROFESSIONALS

You are welcome, masters . . . welcome, good friends.
(Hamlet II.ii)

One identifying characteristic of the professional player is found not so much in his own behaviour as in the response that his offer of service elicits. Hamlet welcomes the players to Elsinore, and he is not alone in the enthusiasm and joy which the players' arrival evokes. "Welcome, good freend," says Thomas More to one of the Lord Cardinal's players, "now, trust me, welcome" (Sir Thomas More IV.i.23, 30). "Now, fellows, you are welcome," says the Lord to the players in The Taming of the Shrew (Ind.i.79), and the Usher of the Hall in Histrion-Mastix bids "Sir Oliver Owlet's men welcome, by God's will" (II.i). Sir Bounteous, in A Mad World, My Masters, greets the players with "Oh, welcome, welcome, my friends!" and, because they are Lord Owemuch's servants, they are the "welcom'st men alive!" (V.i.36, 46). Nor are the hosts backward with more practical offers of hospitality:

Sir Bounteous. Cover a table for the players! . . . Some
sherry for my lord's players there, sirrah! (Mad World V.i.69-72)
Lord. Go, sirrah, take them to the buttery,
And give them friendly welcome every one:
Let them want nothing that my house affords. (Shrew Ind.ii.102-04)
Hamlet. Good my Lord, will you see the players well bestowed?
. . . Use them after your own honour and dignity: the
less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty.
(Hamlet II.ii.518-19, 525-27)

The players' supper in Thomas More's house will be provided "gainste the play be doone, / Elsheshall we stay our guests heere ouer long" (More IV.i.62-3).

The players, however, were not always welcomed by everyone and, although by the seventeenth century many players were gentlemen and landowners, their profession, if they were not established in the London theatres, was very precarious. Sir Bounteous explains that "they were never more uncertain in their lives. Now up and now down, they know not when to play, where to play, nor what to play; not when to play for fearful fools, where to play for Puritan fools, nor what to play for critical fools" (Mad World V.i.29-33). Even those players who were established in the city might be forced to travel, either because of the plague or, as is the case in Hamlet, because the boys "are now the fashion" (II.ii.339). A player's services in the seventeenth century were still as dependent upon patrons and audience as in the sixteenth century.

Although, by the early seventeenth century, there were a few London theatres with their own companies of professional players under royal patronage and very little else allowed or available in the rest of the country, in the early part of the sixteenth century to be an actor was considered every Englishman's right. The king, who had his own company of interlude players, allowed courtiers, nobles, and even gentry to maintain their own companies (EES 2.1: 106). Glynne Wickham hypothesizes that when, in the 1530s, Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, he let loose upon the land a horde of "histrionic clerics" (EES 2.1: 109) clamouring for an alternative means of earning a living. They found it in the public stage. The clerics had had the services of many good authors and copyists, which they retained once outside the Church's walls. With the many professional players who were already in service or who were travelling the country as strollers, the number of acting companies

multiplied enormously and these, together with the fear of the crowds which performances by so many companies would draw and the nature of the plays they were performing, were the reasons for much of the legislature against plays and players (EES 2.1: 109). On 29 June 1572, An Acte for the punishment of Vacabondes and for Releif of the Poore & Impotent was passed, which classed players with rogues and vagabonds, a stigma which actors still carry today. The Act read in part that

. . . All and everye persone and persones beyng whole and mightye in Body and able to labour, havinge not Land or Maister, nor using any lawfull Marchaundize Crafte or Mysterye whereby hee or shee might get his or her Lyvinge, and can gyve no reckninge howe he or shee dothe lawfully get his or her Lyvinge; & all Fencers Bearewardes Comon Players in Enterludes & Minstrels, not belonging to any Baron of this Realme or towards any other honorable Personage of greater Degree; all Juglers Pedlars Tynkers and Petye Chapmen; whiche seid Fencers Bearewardes Comon Players in Enterludes Mynstrels Juglers Pedlers Tynkers & Petye Chapmen, shall wander abroad and have not Lycense of two Justices of the Peace at the leaste, whereof one to be of the Quorum, when and in what Shier they shall happen to wander . . . shalbee taken adjudged and deemed Roges Vacaboundes and Sturdy Beggars. (ES 4: 270)

The punishment if "suche person or persones bee duelye convict of his or her Rogishe or Vacabondes Trade of Lyef: was that he or she would be whipped and "burnte through the gristle of the right Eare with a hot Yron of the compasse of an Ynche about . . ." (ES 4: 270). Gentlemen had lost their right to maintain their own players and, in 1604, when the Act was revised,

the licences of players under patronage of Barons and those of greater degree were also withdrawn. James I had secured sole control of players and the drama. The effect of the 1604 Act was to deprive the provinces of the few local companies remaining and to strengthen the London companies (EES 2.1: 90). Players were by 1610 firmly ensconced in buildings erected solely for the purpose of playing, both publicly and privately, with occasional trips to court to perform in the great halls for royalty and tours to the provinces when plague closed the London theatres. Throughout the reigns of James I and Charles I, this situation did not radically change. As long as the players had Royal Letters Patent, a licence to play granted by the Master of the Revels, they "could travel and set up their 'bills' at will without fear of penalties under the Act for Punishment of Vagabondes" (EES 2.1: 93). In 1642 the theatres were closed because of the threat of civil war and an "Ordinance of the Lords and Commons" dated 22 October 1647 authorized "the Lord Mayor of the City of London, and the Justices of the Peace" to arrest any "common Players or Actors . . . to commit [them] to any common jail or prison, there to remain until the next general Sessions of the Peace . . . there to be punished as Rogues, according to the Law" (EES 2.1: 121) and in 1648 "'All stage-players . . . whether they be wanderers or no, and notwithstanding any License whatsoever from the King or any person . . . ' are forbidden to act" (EES 2.1: 95). Gone was the Englishman's right to be an actor.

Control of the players' freedom to act where they please can be seen in the plays. The professional players characterized in the plays between 1590 and 1620 (as listed in the Harbage/Schoenbaum Annals) belong to touring companies, are provincial actors, or are patronized city players

travelling in the provinces. Players are occasionally seen in their own theatres but usually in plays written for the boys' companies (the boy actors will be discussed separately). In Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew (1594), the players do not declare the patronage of a Baron or person of greater degree, but the trumpet that heralds their arrival is mistaken for that of "some noble gentleman that means, / Travelling some journey, to repose him here" (Ind.i.73-4). The Lord receiving the players uses their fortunate arrival to further his trick on Christopher Sly. He tells them, "I have some sport in hand / Wherein your cunning can assist me much" (Ind.i.89-90) and Sly is told that the play is to be performed by "Your honour's players" (Ind.ii.129). We recognize that the players are good enough for service in some great household, for the Lord commends their acting ability and instructs that everything used to deceive Sly be life-like. The four men and a boy who visit More's house in Sir Thomas More (1595) are the Lord Cardinal's players and the professionals, the most famous players of all, in Shakespeare's Hamlet (1601) are "the tragedians of the city," who are forced to travel because of the "inhibition" or ban on their playing (in town) due to "the late innovation" (II.ii.330-31).

The players in Thomas Middleton's The Mayor of Queenborough or Hengist, King of Kent (1618) do not carry the sign of any patron or lord. They arrive at the mayor's house desiring his "worship's favour and leave to enact in the town-hall" (V.i.68-70). They say they are "comedians, tragedians, tragi-comedians, comi-tragedians, pastorists, humourists, clownists, satirists" (V.i.76-8) who have "play'd before a Lord ere now though [they] be country actors" (V.i.94-5). Local authorities in the provinces, who determinedly fought against players, adhered to the law

by paying companies who had the royal Letters Patent not to act (EES 2.1: 106). And, in the University play Return from Parnassus, Part 2 (1603), the two scholars who are auditioned by Richard Burbage and Will Kempe are less than enthusiastic about becoming actors themselves. Burbage appears again with Henry Condell and John Lowin in John Webster's added induction for the King's Men production of John Marston's The Malcontent (1604), which was written originally for the Queen's Revels Children at Blackfriars. Ben Jonson's Poetaster (1601) was also written for the boys at Blackfriars and the players, Histrio and Aesop, are both portrayed as political meddlars, giving information to courtiers and politicians. In Marston's Histrio-Mastix (1599), tradesmen who cannot find work in time of plenty decide to become a company of players, calling themselves Sir Oliver Owlet's men because "there was never a better man to Players" (I.i), but without any official patronage. As Gutt, the fiddle-string-maker says, "if our parrell be not poynt-device the fatt's i'th fire" (I.i). Some players did, in fact, duplicate the Letters Patent given to their companies and set up companies of their own—warrants for their arrest were issued by the Lord Chamberlain in 1616 (ES 4: 343-44; Gurr 73).

The professional players characterized in the later plays, Philip Massinger's The Roman Actor (1626) and Richard Brome's The Antipodes (1638), are somewhat differently situated. The players in Massinger's play have fallen on hard times: their theatre is empty. Even though Paris is Caesar's favourite, the players have many powerful enemies and their lives are in danger. Lord Letoy's house in Brome's play is "an amphitheater / Of exercise and pleasure" (I.v.53-4) and his men are "My music and my actors. I keep not / A man or boy but is of quality" (I.v.58-9). 'Quality' was an Elizabethan word for the acting profession. Letoy's men are not

players employed as servants to escape arrest and punishment under the laws of vagrancy, but servants who are employed as players. The players in Middleton and Rowley's The Spanish Gypsy (1623) are exiled nobility disguised as gypsies, who tell fortunes, sing, and act for a living in order to escape the law. The object of the Act of 1572 was, according to Glynne Wickham, "to ensure that actors, as a professional class, should be sufficiently well organized to be immediately recognizable to officers of the law for what they were, instead of providing beggars, tramps and criminals with an alibi under which to masquerade and thus escape from justice" (EES 2.1: 104-05). While several powerful nobles in East Anglia and the North were able to evade the law and continued maintaining companies of players for sometime after the passage of the Act, by the time the London theatres were closed in 1642, the antipathy of the Puritans and local authorities towards players had successfully closed the provinces to touring companies (EES 2.1: 106).

In what way were the players "immediately recognizable"? Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, editors of Actors on Acting, suggest several qualities:

Piecing together the brief references in plays and anecdotes, we may say that the Elizabethan actor was distinguished primarily by his excellent voice. He was expected to base his actions and gestures on the words of the poet and to act with decorum and modesty, keeping in mind the qualities of the character being impersonated. Players were frequently recognized by their elaborate dress, whose lavishness substituted for historical similitude in costuming and provided visual pleasure on a relatively bare stage. They were criticized

for strutting and shouting and for directing their attention to the spectators instead of to their fellow players. They were admired for versatility and for maintaining their characterizations consistently throughout the performance. (77-8)

But these qualities are ones the player used on stage. How were the officers of the law able to recognize the players off stage? As Gutt in Histrion-Mastix tells us their "parrell" must be "poynt-device." Those who travelled under a nobleman's patronage declared their service by wearing their master's livery. Those "common or unlicensed players," who did not wear noble livery "were accounted vagabonds and so handled" (Bevington 12). Liveries were granted to the lawful retainers of a noble household and on 3 January 1572 a Proclamation "forbade the giving of any livery of cloths or hat by a lord to other than his menials and lawyers" (ES 4: 268). James Burbage and his fellow actors, the Earl of Leicester's men, wrote to "their good lord and master" requesting that they be appointed household servants, not merely liveried retainers "in order to meet the terms of the proclamation" (ES 2: 86). So, players dressed in household livery, carrying Letters Patent, and licensed by the Master of the Revels, were safe from prosecution. The King's Men each received 4½ yards of red cloth for their new liveries in 1604:

These liveries were renewed every two years and consisted at first of three, and afterwards of four, yards of bastard scarlet for a cloak, and a quarter of a yard of crimson velvet for a cap. These were of course state liveries, not the 'watching' liveries of medley-coloured cloth, at 5s. a yard as against the 26s. 8d. paid for the scarlet. (ES 1: 313)

Any player who left a company had to relinquish his "coate" along with

his "condicion" (ES 2: 239), but the liveries, as well as the Letters Patent, must have been easy to duplicate--a fact confirmed by Sir Oliver Owlet's men. Players did not always wear their livery in town, however, and Stephen Gosson in The Schoole of Abuse (1579) complains about the hirelings' wardrobe:

Overlashing in apparel is so common a fault, that the very hyerlings of some of our players, which stand at reuersion of vi.s by the weeke, iet vnder gentlemens noses in sutes of silke, exercising themselves too prating on the stage, and common scoffing when they come abrode, where they looke askance ouer the shoulder at euery man, of whom the Sunday before they begged an almes. I speake not this, as though euerye one that profeseth the qualitie so abused him selfe, for it is well knowen, that some of them are sober, discreete, properly learned honest housholders and citizens well thought on amonge their neighbours at home, though the pryde of their shadowes (I meane those hange-byes whome they succour with stipend) cause them to bee somewhat il talked of abroade. (ES 4: 204)

E. K. Chambers suggests that much of the finery could have been borrowed from the tiring-house wardrobe and the "articles signed by those joining the Lady Elizabeth's men about 1614 bound them amongst other things not to go out of the theatre with any of the apparel on their bodies" (ES 1: 348). This is still an unwritten rule in the theatre today. The travelling players carried a stock of costumes with them on the road, for they had to be ready to act any play the host might choose from their repertoire. In Histrion-Mastix, during the reign of Poverty after the war, the players try to barter their stock for food. The hostess tells Posthast, "The

Sharers dinners six pence a peece, the hireling pence" and he replies, "Fellowes bring out the hamper choose somewhat out o'th Stocke" (VI.i). As the players cannot afford to pay the poor relief they are shipped off as "idle fellowes out o'th' land" (VI.i).

The fact that the player cannot be recognized by his clothes (unless he is wearing livery) is shown in Robert Greene's The Groatsworth of Wit (published 1592) in the dialogue between Roberto and the player:

"What is your profession?" said Roberto.

"Truly, sir," said he, "I am a player."

"A player," quoth Roberto, "I took you rather for a gentleman of great living, for if by outward habit men should be censured, I tell you, you would be taken for a substantial man."

"So I am where I dwell," quoth the player, "reputed able at my proper cost, to build a windmill. What though the world once went hard with me, when I was fain carry my playing fardle a foot back; Tempora mutantur, I know you know the meaning of it better than I, but I thus conster it, it's otherwise now; for my very share in playing apparel will not be sold for two hundred pounds." (qtd. in Harrison 81)

Greene was a University man and considered players "beneath contempt" (Harrison 79). Studioso in 2 Return from Parnassus has the same feelings:

But ist not strange these mimick apes should prize

Vnhappy Schollers at a hireling rate?

Vile world, that lifts them vp to hye degree,

And treads vs downe in groueling misery.

England affordes those glorious vagabonds,

That carried earst their fardels on their backes,

Coursers to ride on through the gazing streetes,
Sooing it in their glaring Satten sute,
And Pages to attend their maisterships:
With mouthing words that better wits haue framed

They purchase lands, and now Esquiers are namde. (V.i.1918-28)

The professionals had come a long way from strolling minstrels to gentlemen players.

AMATEURS

Is all our company here? (MND I.ii)

Amateur players take no less pride in their work and their status than professional players. Major entertainments in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were performed by amateurs. Each large town had its own Miracle Cycle of plays performed by members of the trade guilds, occasionally employing professional players "to fortify the casting" (EES 2.1: 101). Pageants on civic holidays were also produced and performed by local townspeople and acting regulations for the York Plays in the fifteenth century show how seriously the amateurs committed themselves to the task of playing:

. . . And all manner of craftsmen bring forth their pageants in order and course by good players, well arrayed and openly speaking. . . . And that every player that shall play be ready in his pageant at convenient time. . . . (From a proclamation

issued at York in 1415)

. . . That yearly in the time of Lent there shall be called before the mayor for the time being four of the most cunning discreet and able players within the city, to search, hear, and examine all the players and plays and pageants throughout all the artificers belonging to the Corpus Christi play. And all such as they shall find sufficient in person and cunning, to the honor of the city and the worship of the said crafts, for to admit and able; and all other insufficient persons, either in cunning, voice or person to discharge, remove or avoid. (From York order of 1476, qtd. in Cole 40)

But, with the rise of professional players, who had more opportunities to practise their craft or 'cunning,' and the ban on religious plays, the amateur player had almost nowhere to perform by the seventeenth century. Nowhere that is except at court. The immense popularity of the masque in Elizabeth's and particularly James' court gave the courtiers and lords numerous opportunities to 'strut their stuff' before their monarch.

A brief glance at some of the plays, produced approximately between 1590 and 1620 in which amateur players perform, reveals a connection between the amateur player character's changing status in the drama and the amateur player's status in society. In Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy (1587), Hieronimo, Knight Marshal and unofficial Master of the Revels in the Spanish court, arranges dumb shows for visiting ambassadors and tragedies for his own revenge. The company of townspeople, led by Turnop with the help of a minstrel, in Anthony Munday's John A Kent and John A Cumber (1589), prepares a speech for the Lords' entrance into the city. They later sing a song for the bride and, when John A Cumber asks the 'clowns' to perform a play to spite John A Kent, they are afraid of reprisals and refuse. Only with assurances of protection from Cumber do they finally agree to perform. Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream (1595) offers us the inept but well-meaning crew of 'rude mechanicals,' who rehearse and perform an interlude for the Duke's wedding celebration. In Love's Labour's Lost (1595), Shakespeare shows us the King of Navarre and his companions' masque and his courtiers and townspeople's pageant arranged for the King and the visiting Princess of France. The pageant resembles the elaborate entertainments offered the Queen on her Progresses (David xxxvi). In Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part 1 (1597), it is again

royalty who assumes the actor's role when Prince Hal plays his father in an extempore scene with his co-actor Falstaff. In the first of Munday and Chettle's Robin Hood plays, The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon (1598), the poet Skelton plays Friar Tuck in the play he has written for Sir John Eltam. Sir John, who has been told by the King to "take great heede / Wee faile not of our day" (I.i.18-9) for the performance, plays Little John. The second play, The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon (1598), is the promised continuation of the story with "the other matters tragicall" which "His Highnesse . . . expects withall" (lines 2785-87), in which Prince John dances as one of the masquers. The masque at the end of Marston's Antonio's Revenge (1600) is danced by courtiers who use the 'taking out' to surprise their audience with death and revenge, and the masque at the end of The Revenger's Tragedy (1606) is used in the same way. The masque and what could be called an anti-masque in Thomas Dekker's Satiromastix (1601) are performed by courtiers and the poet Horace. The King arranges and performs the first masque with his lords in Chapman's The Gentleman Usher (1602), while the usher Bassiolo arranges the second masque and anti-masque in which the nobleman Strozza's nephew and servants perform. The play The Slip in Middleton's A Mad World, My Masters (1606) is planned and performed (much of it extempore) by Follywit to gull and rob his grandsire, Sir Bounteous Progress, while, in Beaumont's The Knight of the Burning Pestle (1607), it is the citizen and his wife who control the play in which they insist their apprentice Ralph perform. The courtiers who perform the masque in Middleton's Women Beware Women (1621) are so busy trying to kill each other that the plot is totally abandoned and the Duke cannot follow the argument. The argument or plot was generally given to the monarch beforehand so that he or she could be

informed about the content of the play (Mehl, Dumb Show 117). Finally, in a later play, Richard Brome's A Jovial Crew, performed "at the Cock-pit in Drury Lane in the year 1641" prior to the closing of the theatres, gentlemen and ladies disguise themselves as beggars and perform a play about their own lives before an audience which is correctively affected by the moral of the play. The drama was used by amateurs and professionals for similar purposes--for entertainment, for instruction, and for satisfaction (both emotional and financial). The amateur player's social status fluctuates from townsman to royalty, from tradesman to courtier, and from gentleman to beggar. His career seemed as precarious as that of the professional.

There are several apparent characteristic differences between the amateur and professional players shown in the selection of plays in which they appear. The amateurs are usually lacking in acting skill. Their performances, unless they are courtiers dancing as masquers, are either bad or need explanation. Amateur players are more likely to forget their parts or have difficulty learning their lines, while both professionals and amateurs can be 'put out' by the audience, with the exception of the player renowned for his clowning and improvisation. One further point of interest is that amateurs are often shown in rehearsal while professionals might discuss their art but are always ready for immediate performance. The character of the amateur player reflects the fact that, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the amateurs, poor and wealthy, were the mainstay of England's civic and sacred entertainments, such as the Lord Mayor's processions and shows, Royal entries, pageants, festivals, and holy days and saints' days' celebrations. In the late fifteenth century "countless 'dramatic societies'

recruited from the inhabitants of English towns and villages . . . staged plays in their own community and visited other towns to perform there" (Tydeman 215). By the 1570s, most of these troupes had been displaced by professionals (the terms amateur and professional are not precise until the building of the Theatre in 1576 clearly distinguished the professional from the semi-professional and amateur), so that by 1590 the drama was more likely to portray the amateur as the professional's inferior, although this distinction was probably not always the actual case in the early Renaissance.

One of the main criticisms of the players was that they played for money. As William Fleetwood, Recorder of the City of London, said in 1584:

It hath not been used nor thought meet heretofore that players have or should make their living on the art of playing; but men for their livings, using other honest and lawful arts, or retained in honest services, have by companies learned some interludes for some increase to their profit by other men's pleasures in vacant time of recreation. (EES 2.1: 99-100)

For the amateurs there is no question of giving up the profession by which they earn their main income. Neither Bottom and his company nor Turnop and his company have any intention of becoming professional players. As honest and lawful artisans and servants they are content to produce some interludes for the honour of performing before gentry and nobility and, possibly, for the prospect of a small remuneration to supplement their income. When Bottom does not return from the woods, his fellow actors lament his financial loss:

Flute. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life. He could not have scaped sixpence a day.

An the Duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing
 Pyramus, I'll be hanged! He would have deserved it. Sixpence
 a day in Pyramus, or nothing! (IV.ii.18-22)

Turnop and his clowns are rewarded by the Lords for their welcome speech:

Pem. thanks gentle freendes, heere drinke this for my sake

Moor. And this [of] for me, comending your great paynes,
 which in more liberall sorte we will requite.

Ame. May it please ye Lordes to walk into the Castell
 and there at full weelee see their other sportes.

Pem. with all my hart, goe, we will followe ye.

Tur. Before you goe, in name of all this trayne

Turnop accepts your golde, and thanks you for your payne.

(lines 393-400)

Some kind of remuneration would be necessary to defray the amateur's cost of putting on a production. Bottom's company use costumes and properties, some of which would have been made especially for the production of Pyramus and Thisbe; although it is obvious that small troupes would not have the outlay that a large spectacle or pageant would require.

The ability of the players was also important, as we have noted with the regulations for actors at York. As the drama seems to share similar concerns with those expressed in contemporary documents, it would seem reasonable to assume (as many criticisms of the value of plays, players, and the theatre in general are dealt with in the plays) that the drama was a fair reflection of reality and that the Renaissance belief in the metaphor of the world as a stage was not mere fiction. I am, therefore, assuming that the concerns the amateur players express in the plays and the way they express them are life-like. Both Bottom and Turnop are

eager to take the main part because they feel they will perform it better than the others in the company. The townsmen in John a Kent meet to decide who will speak the speech for the Lords:

Tur. Nay neuer talke of it, Hugh the Sexten stutters, let him read the first lyne, or see if he can say the speeche, that dawes our Churchwarden made in prayse of his Mill horsse.

Hugh. It makes no matter, I think my selfe the wisest because I am Sexten, and being Sexten, I will say the speeche I made my selfe.

Tom. heare ye Hugh, be not so forward, take a little vise of your
minstrell.

Omnes. And well sayd Thomas Tabrer, you haue scression, speak on.

Tom. One of the wisest of vs must speak, and either [he] it must be
Hugh or

Turnop. Now, Hugh is Sexten, an office of retoritie I tell ye.

Tur. yea, thats when he is in the Belfrie, not else.

Omnes. Hugh Hugh, Hugh shall speak the speache to the Lordes.

Tom. But Turnop beeing my Lordes man, his hogheard, his famili-
aritie seruaunt, he in my minde is not only fit, but also accessary
for the ration making, then Turnop say I.

Omnes. Turnop, Turnop, wee le haue none but Turnop.

Tur. well, for your wisdomes, in chusing me, I rest quoniam dig-
nitatis vestrum primarion, as the Poet Pediculus sayth, at
the next vestrie, bound to deferre ye to seuerall locall places.

Spur. how now Hugh? are ye put downe infaith?

Hugh. Thats because he has a little more learning, an(d) has borrowe(
the vshers olde coat to grace him selfe withall (lines 335-56)

It is Turnop's position in the Lord's household, his higher learning, and his outward appearance that help him obtain the part, while Bottom is given the main part in Pyramus and Thisbe because "he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens" and is "the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice" (IV.ii.9-12). Bottom is concerned that all the parts should be played well and that he should play them:

Bot. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? A lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

Bot. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes: I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest—yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. (I.ii.17-25)

.

And I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice: 'Thisne, Thisne!--'Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisbe dear, and lady dear!' (I.ii.47-50)

.

Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me. I will roar, that I will make the Duke say: 'Let him roar again; let him roar again!' (I.ii.66-9)

Once Bottom has decided to play the part of Pyramus, his next problem is the matter of costume:

I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your

orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow. (I.ii.86-9)

Turnop's ability is in his social standing and usher's coat, Bottom's is in his voice and wit, Sir John Eltam's in The Downfall of Robert lies in the fact that he commissioned the play and has his own green suit for the part of Little John, while the Constable in A Mad World, My Masters is type-cast as himself. The constable arrests Follywit's men as they are escaping from Sir Bounteous's house after the robbery, which they committed under the guise of players. Follywit is still wearing the justice's chain he 'borrowed' for the play and begins to extemporize in an effort to escape suspicion. He addresses the constable, while the constable addresses Sir Bounteous:

Fol. How now, constable, what news with thee?

Con. May it please your worship, sir, here are a company of auspicious fellows.

Sir B. To me? Puh! Turn to th'justice, you whoreson hobbyhorse!

This is some new player now; they put all their fools to the constable's part still. (V.ii.73-8)

The amateurs can declaim and extemporize but they do not have the professionals' ability to 'personate' their roles and to be too true-to-life or realistic does not suit a theatrical performance. It is the professional player's ability to play the fine line between reality and theatricality which lies outside the amateur's range and this is evident in the drama of the time.

In the masques in the plays, the courtier's ability is more than adequate when he performs as one of the masquers. As soon as he steps outside his usual role and plays a speaking part, his performance is less

than adequate. E. K. Chambers says that in the Elizabethan masque, "The maskers proper seem to have been traditionally mum and therefore unable to explain themselves" (ES 1: 190) and the performer who offered explanation, if required, is called the 'truchman' or interpreter (ES 1: 190). Hieronimo, in The Spanish Tragedy, is literally an interpreter as his tragedy is acted in "unknown languages":

Hier. And I myself in an oration,

And with a strange and wondrous show besides,

That I will have there behind a curtain,

Assure yourself shall make the matter known. (IV.i.184-87)

Whether the tragedy was acted in Latin, Greek, Italian, and French we do not know, but Hieronimo does seem to have trouble making himself understood. After his long speech explaining why he has killed Lorenzo and why Bel-imperia killed Balthazar, before killing herself, his audience ask him to explain his reason:

King. Speak, traitor: damned, bloody murderer, speak!

For now I have thee I will make thee speak:

Why hast thou done this undeserving deed?

Vice. Why hast thou murdered my Balthazar?

Cast. Why hast thou butcher'd both my children thus? (IV.iv.163-67)

Medice in The Gentleman Usher, who assures the King that he will "play [his] part / That you shall say Nature yields more than Art" (I.i.230-31), is easily put out in the Duke's masque when Prince Vincentio constantly interrupts him:

Alph. [to Medice]. Now, my lord.

Vinc. [to Medice]. Now is the time, man, speak.

Med. Peace.

Alph. Peace, Vincentio.

Vinc. 'Swounds, my lord,
Shall I stand by and suffer him to shame you?--
My Lord Medice!

Str. Will you not speak, my lord?

Med. How can I?

Vinc. But you must speak, in earnest.--
Would not your highness have him speak, my lord?

Med. Yes, and I will speak, and perhaps speak so
As you shall never mend. I can, I know.

Vinc. Do, then, my good lord.

Alph. Medice, forth.

Med. Goddess, fair goddess, for no less--no less-- [He stammers.]

Alph. "No less, no less"? No more, no more!— [To Strozza.]
Speak you.

Med. [aside] 'Swounds, they have put me out. (I.ii.58-69)

Medice is not able to either ignore his audience's reaction or artfully incorporate it into his part.

Although, according to E. K. Chambers, the "normal practice seems to have been to hire players and their boys for the antimask and for the speaking parts," even though "a part might be taken by one of the numerous persons employed as devisers or trainers" (ES 1: 200-01), M. C. Bradbrook says that "royalty enacted the parts of gods (and the professional players were given only grotesque parts in an anti-masque) . . . " (Themes and Conventions 253-54). Whichever is correct, Cupid in Ben Jonson's Christmas, His Masque (1616) is not the best of performers. His mother, Venus, "a deafe Tire-woman," comes to see her child act before the King:

Ven. I forsooth, he'le say his part, I warrant him, as well as ere a Play boy of 'em all: I could ha' had money enough for him, an I would ha' beene tempted, and ha' let him out by the weeke, to the Kings Players: Master Burbadge has beene about and about with me; and so has old Mr. Hemings too, they ha' need of him, where is he tro'a? I would faine see him, pray God they have given him some drinke since he came. (lines 132-39)

When Cupid's turn comes, his mother's helpful words of advice quite put him out:

Ven. 'Tis a good child, speake out, hold up your head, Love.

Cup. And which Cupid--and which Cupid, &c.

Ven. Do not shake so, Robin, if thou beese a-cold, I ha' some warme waters for thee, here.

Chr. Come, you put Robin Cupid out with your waters, and your fisling; will you be gone?

Ven. I forsooth; hee's a child, you must conceive, and must be us'd tenderly; he was never in such an assembly before, forsooth, but once at the Warmoll Quest, forsooth, where he sayd grace as prettily as any of the Sheriffes Hinch-boyes, forsooth.

Chr. Will you peace, forsooth?

Cup. And which Cupid--and which Cupid, &c.

Ven. I, that's a good boy, speake plaine, Robin: how does his Majestie like him, I pray? will he give (him) eight pence a day, thinke you? speak out, Robin.

Chr. Nay, he is out enough, you may take him away, and begin your Dance; this it is to have speeches. (lines 251-69)

Christmas shows the frustration of working with players who are not able

to perform speeches. Don Adriano de Armado is asked by the King to prepare "some delightful ostentation, or show, or pageant, or antic, or firework" for the Princess of France in Love's Labour's Lost. He recruits Holofernes, a schoolmaster, Sir Nathaniel, a curate, Dull, a constable, Costard, a clown, and his own page, Moth, to perform with him. The curate, however, is not capable of delivering his speech when faced with a noisy audience. Costard, as Pompey, is called on to take away Sir Nathaniel as Alexander; Costard chastises 'Alisander' and, after the conqueror has retired, excuses the amateur's incompetence:

There, an't shall please you: a foolish mild man; an honest man, look you, and soon dashed! He is a marvellous neighbour, faith, and a very good bowler; but, for Alisander,--alas! you see how 'tis,--a little o'erparted. (V.ii.574-78)

The amateur player's major characteristics (as he is portrayed in the drama), whether he is performing a speech in a play, an interlude, a pageant, a masque, or any other delightful ostentation, include his lack of ability, skill, and self-confidence on stage. He is also, conversely, characterized by his abundance of self-confidence and excessive acting technique. Moderation is not the amateur player's strongest point.

BOYS

And one boy play them all? (More IV.i)

In the sixteenth century, says M. St. Clare Byrne, "Childhood, like the diseases incident to it, was a thing to be got over as quickly as possible. . . . it was the natural consequence of an ideal which envisaged happiness as the result of a fully developed use and realization of all the faculties proper to the adult man" (196). The boy actors could never be 'ideally happy' because their faculties were obviously not as fully developed as the adult actors' but there is no reason to believe that their acting ability was any less skilled. Actors do not have to be adult to impress even the most critical of audiences. And the Elizabethans' fondness for child actors was possibly an appreciation of the boys' attempts to attain the ideal by playing adult roles. The playwrights for the boys' companies wrote plays which exploited the boys' ability to parody or burlesque adults, while the playwrights for the adult companies wrote some of the greatest female roles in the English drama for their boys. The boys were able to play more to type and age in the roles of children and pages, but they were chiefly employed, and seldom o'erparted, for their talent as parodists of adults and themselves (in the inductions to the plays written for children's companies) and as women.

We tend to assume that boys played only female or juvenile parts in the early professional troupes. Bevington, however, has found no evidence in the drama to support such an assumption:

. . . no pre-Elizabethan play offered for acting provides positive evidence of the existence of the boy. . . . It is erroneous, then to speak of "the boy" as a predictable and

unchanging member of these popular troupes. His position during the sixteenth century was evidently subject to continual redefinition. Even though his function became more specialized with time, the progression was not steady. . . . Again, there seems little basis for thinking that boys were used from the very first solely for feminine or juvenile roles. Nearly all the early impressions of these boy actors suggest versatility and not specialization. (76, 78)

From Juliet to Rosalind to Cleopatra and from Malevole to Antonio to Sir Bounteous Progress--the boys certainly were versatile! The boys who attended the academic schools would, of course, be well trained in rhetoric, elocution, and gesture. Schoolmasters used the drama to teach and the boys would be well-versed in Seneca, Plautus, and Terence. Andrew Gurr tells us of a schoolmaster called Richard Brinsley, who "wrote a book in 1612 called Ludus Literarius, praising the value of playing in the education of schoolchildren" and that "the pupils of the best schoolmasters were anxiously sought after by the managers [of the boys' companies]" (94). The choristers of St. Paul's were likewise sought after to play in pageants and masques because of their training and talent (Hillebrand 36). Those who disapproved of players, however, attacked not only the actors but the schoolmasters as well:

When I see by them yong boies, inclining of themselues vnto
 widkednes, trained vp in filthie speeches, vnnatural and
 vnseemlie gestures, to be brought vp by these Schoole-masters
 in bawderie, and in idlenes, I cannot chuse but with teares
 and grieve of hart lament. . . . (Anthony Munday, ES 4: 212)

By 1590 "the stage as a profession had ripened to such a point

that great actors began to appear," but prior to that date the only competition for the boys were the strolling minstrels, Lords' companies, or untrained guildsmen (Hillebrand 38). The children had the best playwrights working for them and they produced the same kind of plays as the adults. The children of the Chapel Royal and St. Paul's frequented the court until the late 1580s and drama in schools and universities flourished. Thomas Heywood in An Apology for Actors (1612) stresses the importance of being trained as an actor:

Do not the Vniuersities, the fountaines and well-springs of all good Arts, Learning and Documents, admit the like in their Colledges? and they (I assure my selfe) are not ignorant of their true vse. In the time of my residence in Cambridge, I haue seene Tragedyes, Comedyes, Historyes, Pastorals and Shewes, publickly acted, in which Graduates of good place and reputation, haue bene specially parted: this is held necessary for the emboldening of their Iunior schollers, to arme them with audacity, against they come to bee imployed in any publicke exercise. . . .

(qtd. in Bentley 13)

While the training was of paramount importance, not all the boys were suitable for the companies. In Marston's What You Will (1601), when Simplicius desires the schoolboy, Holifernes Pippo, for his page, the schoolmaster tells him:

And you have a propensitude to him, he shall be for you: I was solicited to graunt him leave to play the Lady in comedies presented by Children, but I knew his voice was to smale and his stature to loe, sing, sing a treble Holifernes; sing.

The Song.

A very smale sweete voice Ile assure you. (II.i)

The boys in the adult companies, many of whom were without the benefit of education, learned their craft as apprentices to the major players in their company. In the last decade of the sixteenth century when the children's companies were no longer performing, the boys in the professional companies were demonstrating, with their versatility, the benefits of practical training. In Sir Thomas More, although More professes surprise that the boy will play all three female parts, he does not criticize the boy's lack of versatility in the performance (albeit the boy gets the chance to play only one of the roles).

By the turn of the century the Children of Paul's were playing again, and on 2 September 1600, Henry Evans leased the Blackfriars theatre from the Burbages and, under the mastership of Nathaniel Giles, the Chapel children recommenced playing as well. Marston was writing for Paul's and Jonson for Blackfriars and the boys found themselves in the middle of a theatrical war, begun by these two playwrights. The aspersive comments about players on the 'common' stages in Jonson's Cynthia's Revels and Poetaster must be taken in the context of the rivalry between the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars on one hand and the Children of Paul's and the Lord Chamberlain's Men on the other. Rosencrantz, in his comments regarding the success of the "little eyases" in Hamlet, refers to "an eyrie of children," only one competitor.² The 1603 Quarto of Hamlet clearly states the children's success:

Gilderstone. I'faith, my lord, novelty carries it away; for the principal public audience that came to them [the adult city players] are turned to private plays and to the humor of children. (II.ii.262-64)

Histrion, the player in Poetaster,³ tells Tucca that the players have hired one Demetrius (Dekker), a "dresser of plays," to abuse Horace (Jonson) because "it will get us a huge deal of money, captain, and we have need on't; for this winter has made us all poorer than so many starved snakes: nobody comes at us; not a gentleman, nor a--" (Poetaster III.iv.285-87). Hamlet suggests that the boys abuse themselves when they "berattle the common stages":

Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing?
Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves
to common players--as it is most like, if their means are no
better--their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against
their own succession? (II.ii.344-49)

A commission from James I to Giles in November 1606 dissociated the Children of the Chapel Royal from the second Blackfriars theatre, which became known as the Children of the Revels, in 1608 as the Children of Blackfriars, and in August 1608 Evans dissolved the company and the lease reverted to Burbage, who then leased it to his own company, the King's Men (Shapiro, Children of the Revels 27). The theatre at Paul's was closed in 1606-07 for reasons unknown (Hillebrand 216) and so by 1609, the adult companies, including their own boy players, were once again in command of the professional stage.

The plays reveal that audiences knew that a boy had a natural ability for playing. In Shrew and Love's Labour's Lost, the boys, Bartholomew and Moth, are not trained actors but their talent for personation is never questioned. The Lord, who has Bartholomew dress "in all suits like a lady" (Ind.i.104), knows "the boy will well usurp the grace, / Voice, gait, and action of a gentlewoman" (Ind.i.129-30).

Bartholomew's reward for his performance as Sly's wife will be the love of his lord, who will help him by directing his co-actors and providing technical assistance:

Tell him from me, as he will win my love,
 He bear himself with honourable action,
 Such as he hath observ'd in noble ladies
 Unto their lords, by them accomplished.

. . . .

And if the boy have not a woman's gift
 To rain a shower of commanded tears,
 An onion will do well for such a shift,
 Which in a napkin being close convey'd,
 Shall in despite enforce a watery eye. (Ind.i.107-26)

All that is needed for Bartholomew's successful impersonation of a lady is the correct costume and the credible reactions of his co-actors, the servants. The only drawback to Moth's playing the role of Hercules is his size. However, Holofernes sees no problem because he will have an apology to explain that Hercules is in his "minority." Moth's wit and sense of performance adds theatricality to the device:

Hol. Shall I have audience? he shall present Hercules in minority:
 his enter and exit shall be strangling a snake; and I will
 have an apology for that purpose.

Moth. An excellent device! so if any of the audience hiss, you
 may cry "Well done, Hercules! now thou crushest the snake!"
 That is the way to make an offence gracious, though few have
 the grace to do it. (V.i.129-35)

The audience, which makes such fun of the adults in the pageant, does not

interrupt Moth's performance.

Ralph, the apprentice, in The Knight of the Burning Pestle, shows that boys are more than capable of immersing themselves in their roles and at the same time responding to and dealing with an audience. The boy player who tries to pacify the citizen grocer and his wife and accommodate their wishes is patient and calm. And the other members of the children's company who perform the play seem not to be thrown by the unrehearsed presence of Ralph as the grocer-knight:

Lady. Happy that cobbling dame, whoe'er she be,
 That for her own, dear Ralph, hath gotten thee!
 Unhappy I, that ne'er shall see the day
 To see thee more, that bear'st my heart away!

Ralph. Lady, farewell; I needs must take my leave.

Lady. Hard-hearted Ralph, that ladies dost deceive!

Cit. Hark thee, Ralph: there's money for thee: give something in
 the King of Cracovia's house; be not beholding to him.

Ralph. Lady, before I go, I must remember
 Your father's officers, who truth to tell,
 Have been about me very diligent.
 Hold up thy snowy hand, thou princely maid!
 There's twelve-pence for your father's chamberlain;
 And another shilling for his cook . . . (IV.ii.48-62)

Without skipping a beat, Ralph and the boy playing the Lady accept the money and incorporate it into the script.

The versatility of the boy actors is evident in all the plays in which they appear as player characters, but the plays written for the boys' companies obviously display their versatility to greater advantage

than the plays written for the adult companies. The boys who travel with the adult troupes are seen mainly in female roles. Hamlet greets the boy player as "young lady and mistress" (II.ii.421) and Thomas More assumes, as there is only one boy in the company, that "ther's but fewe women in the play" (IV.i.56). The boy in Paris's company in The Roman Actor only appears in the final play. The first play is performed by the adults and the female role in the second play is taken by Caesar's cousin, Domitilla. The final play, in which the boy plays a role very like Domitia herself, is not a simple one. The boy has long emotional speeches to deliver and his scene ends with Paris kissing him. The fact that the audience have not seen the boy previously would help the illusion--the boy appears as a lady. In the induction to Antonio and Mellida, when the boy players are discussing how to play their roles, the boy playing Antonio worries about portraying the lady he has to disguise himself as, but the boys who do play the female roles in the main play do not appear in the induction.

The young boys' successes as women, of course, had much to do with the fact that their voices had a higher pitch than adult males. Their physical movement could be trained to be lady-like, as in The Downfall of Robert when Skelton tells "little Tracy" not to leap "like a lad" (line 30), but once their voices had broken, for most of the boys, the young female roles would no longer be possible. Hamlet says to the boy player:

By'r lady, your lady-ship is nearer to heaven than when I saw
you last by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice,
like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the
ring. (II.ii.421-25)

Hamlet also fears that if the boys rob the adults of their audiences, the

adult companies will fold and there will be no work for the boys when they grow older.

Many boys did make the transition from child to adult actor and became very successful. Nathan Field was one of them. He was a pupil of a grammar school run by a Mr. Moncaster and also one of the boys impressed by Evans and Giles for the Children of the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars in 1600. His name appears in the actor lists for Jonson's Cynthia's Revels and Poetaster and, as Edwin Nungezer reports, he "possibly acted Humphrey in The Knight of the Burning Pestle (c. 1610), for the Citizen's Wife asks . . . : 'Were you never one of Master Moncaster's scholars?'" (136). His name also appears in an account given by the Burbages in 1635 of their take-over of the Blackfriars theatre:

In processe of time, the boyes growing up to bee men, which were Underwood, Field, Ostler, and were taken to strengthen the King's service; and the more to strengthen the service, the boyes dayly wearing out, it was considered that house would bee as fitt for ourselves, and soe purchased the lease remaining from Evans with our money, and placed men players, which were Heminges, Condall, Shakspeare, &c. (ES 2: 215)

There is some debate over whether Field joined the King's Men in 1609 or left and came back about 1616 (ES 2: 215). Nungezer says that Field was a member of the Chapel Royal (which became the Queen's Revels in 1603) between 1600 and 1613. In March 1613 the Queen's Revels and Lady Elizabeth's Men amalgamated and in 1614 Lady Elizabeth's Men presented Jonson's Bartholomew Fair, which contains the following passage:

Cokes. Which is your Burbage now?

Leath. What mean you by that, sir?

Cokes. Your best actor, your Field?

Littl. Good, i'faith! You are even with me, sir. (V.iii.78-82)

Nungezer suggests that Field played the part of Littlewit,⁴ as he was the leading actor of the company, and his name is further linked with Burbage's by Richard Flecknoe:

It was the happiness of the actors of those times to have such poets as these [Jonson, Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher] to instruct them and write for them; and no less of these poets to have such docile and excellent actors to act their plays, as a Field and Burbage. . . . (qtd. in Cole 91)

The 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare's works lists Field as a member of the King's Men. Nathan Field died between May 1619 and August 1620, a successful player and playwright. He was definitely one of the boys unharmed by "exclaiming against their own succession" while a member of "an eyrie of children" (Hamlet II.ii.337, 349).

ACTING

1. **TECHNIQUE:** the true imitation of life, without striving to make nature a monster (The White Devil, Epilogue)

Before I discuss the question of whether acting in the Renaissance was natural or formal, I think it is necessary to put in perspective the actors and the nature of their playing places. Looking back over the changing acting styles through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which are well documented, we can see that the buildings in which the actors performed were a major cause of those changes. The larger and less-lit the theatre or space is, the larger and more expressive the acting and, correspondingly, the more intimate and well-lit the space, the more moderate and naturalistic the acting. The 'pointing' and declamatory style of Garrick's stage (although I am not suggesting that Garrick himself was excessive, his performance would necessarily have to be larger than life to carry over the footlights) gave way to the more realistic introspection of the Stanislavski method in the smaller Moscow Arts Theatre. Thanks to extensive scholarship on the theatres themselves by Herbert Berry, Glynne Wickham, Richard Southern, Richard Hosley, W. J. Lawrence, and John Orrell, among others, we know that the Elizabethan theatres were intimate affairs, despite the fact that the public theatres could hold three thousand spectators. We also know that the Renaissance player performed in the great banqueting halls, town halls, inn yards, and small private theatres. He had, in other words, to be able not only to suit the action to the word but also to suit the performance to the place.

Any analysis of the acting style of the player character will be

more complex than of actors in general. The player who is playing the 'player' is sometimes required to play another character (for example, the player characters in Hamlet, Taming of the Shrew, Sir Thomas More, and The Roman Actor), and the player who is playing a character is sometimes required to play a 'player,' who is playing another character (for example, the amateurs in Midsummer Night's Dream, Mad World, My Masters, and Spanish Tragedy). We are faced, therefore, with many levels of playing and many different acting styles. Where the players are acting in plays within plays, their acting styles might also vary according to the setting of the play-within-the-play, or the masque, or the pageant, or whatever "delightful ostentation" they have in hand. I shall, because of these complications, start with a survey of what critics and scholars, both modern and contemporary, have said about the nature of Renaissance acting, keeping in mind that the evidence is not empirical because of the very nature of live theatre. Each account is the subjective opinion of its writer and not necessarily a universal assumption.

Recent scholarship seems to favour if not a naturalistic acting style then a style which changed from formal to natural between 1576 and 1642. Jane L. Donawerth, in a paper given at the Ohio Shakespeare Conference in 1981, cites B. L. Joseph and Alfred Harbage as advocates for a formal style and Marvin Rosenberg as the main spokesman for a naturalistic style (175). She agrees with Daniel Seltzer "that the Elizabethan acting style must have been a fairly 'large' or formal one, but one that changed over the period with the playwright's changing techniques of characterization" (175), but Seltzer also believes that physical acting remained unchanged throughout the period and it was the considerable alterations in "details of address" which required the

changes in vocal tone, pitch, pacing, et cetera ("Actors and Staging" 53). The fundamental point on which Donawerth says she differs from these critics is her belief in a corresponding change in acting theory:

Dependence on rhetoric is the main reason to suppose the art of acting the same throughout Shakespeare's career. . . . That rhetorical delivery and acting depend on the same elements of language—voice and gesture—does not mean, however, that they share all other features. . . . In accord with theatrical practice and in response to Puritan criticism, the players gradually developed a theory of acting as an art distinct from both its model, rhetorical delivery, and its occasion, dramatic poetry. We may trace three stages in theory, each with a corresponding moral purpose, each borrowing but adapting ideas from rhetoric or poetic: the first emphasizes passion, the second, character, and the last grace. (165-66)

'Style' I shall define as the practical execution of acting and 'theory' as the explanation or system of acting. In this respect the actors owed much to Elizabethan psychology, which gave them a vocabulary they could use to identify typical and individual, general and specific kinds of character behaviour.⁵ Lise-Lone Marker, whom Donawerth aligns with the 'formalists,' states, in her article "Nature and Decorum in the Theory of Elizabethan Acting," that

The Elizabethan performer created his roles within the parameters of an aesthetic system founded on the fundamental classical belief that Nature consists of absolute forms which the artist, by presenting active counterparts of truth through his own medium, brings to life. . (107)

The drama, she says, did not pretend to mirror the "surface realities of everyday life" (91); its purpose was to be true to life, a conception which presupposes "the existence of an ideal, universal truth" (89). The player is the medium through which this truth is brought to life and his creative involvement is intense and personal. Each player is allowed his own choice of "gesture, pantomime and inflection" (94), although

in the Elizabethan theatre (as in the classical theatre) it was accepted as a truism that a tangible and demonstrable link existed between inner emotion and its expression in outward form, or, as Thomas Wright [in The Passions of the Mind] phrased it, 'that external actions as voice, and gestures, were signes of internall passions' (92)

and that the Elizabethan actor would follow the classical rules for the external expression of internal passions. In Hamlet and The Roman Actor, the player and Paris show sadness with their tears. Seltzer believes that Shakespeare's plays show evidence of an internalizing technique, which we associate with naturalistic theatre. There are characters who merely "demonstrate" or "'play' without the truth of inner feeling" ("Prince Hal and Tragic Style" 16) but there are also characters who outwardly express their true inner feelings. Only the actor who plays the role of the First Player in Hamlet knows which of these characters he actually is.

What were the classical rules to which Lise-Lone Marker refers? Cicero in De Oratore explains that

every emotion of the mind has from nature its own peculiar look, tone, and gesture; and the whole frame of a man, and his whole countenance, and the variation of his voice sound

like strings in a musical instrument, just as they are moved
by the affections of the mind. (qtd. in Cole 24)

No audience can be expected to be moved if the player is not moved himself:

For it is not easy to cause the judge to be angry with him
with whom you desire him to be angry, if you yourself appear
to take the matter coolly; or to make him hate him whom you
wish him to hate, unless he first see you burning with hatred;
nor will he be moved to pity, unless you give him plain indi-
cations of your own acute feeling, by your expressions, senti-
ments, tone of voice, look, and finally by sympathetic tears
. . . no fuel is so combustible as to kindle without the
application of fire. (Cicero 22)

The "fire" is the animated performance of the player and even the famous Roman players could fall short or go too far in their performances. Roscius, the comedian, was praised for his graceful action but never loudly applauded when he played in a mask, because the audience could not see his facial expressions. Aesop, the tragedian, was so carried away by his passion in one performance that he killed a slave-actor (Cole 20, 23). The moderation in performance pleaded for in Renaissance drama is as much an attribute of the naturalistic theory as of the formal theory and the importance of 'look, tone, and gesture' is inherent in both acting styles.

The rhetoric used to conjure the passions does, of course, identify formal acting style, which is more closely aligned to the orator's art than the player's. Cicero was addressing orators in his De Oratore and Heywood's Apology instructs scholars to study rhetoric to enable them to speak well and with judgment. As Polonius says to Hamlet after Hamlet's

performance of the Pyrrhus speech: "'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion" (II.ii.462-63). Both Cicero and Heywood suggest, however, that the way to learn the orator's art is to watch the actor perform; for "the orators, who are the deliverers of truth itself, have neglected this whole department [the art of delivery], and the players, who are only the imitators of truth, have taken possession of it" (Cicero 24). Andrew Gurr explains that the term 'acting' originally described the orator's art of gesture in the sixteenth century but, by the seventeenth century, 'playing' on the common stages was called 'acting' (97). Donawerth suggests that formal style was mainly rhetorical with the emphasis on passion but, in theory, the emphasis changed to character and then grace. Lise-Lone Marker holds that passion and grace were a consistent part of Elizabethan acting theory. But to know that these mere 'imitators of truth' fired their speeches with animation or 'lively action' is not to know how they did it. T. S. Eliot talks of the difficulties of writing verse drama--difficulties which he asserts were unknown to Shakespeare:

[The people] must on your stage be able to perform the same action, and lead the same lives, as in the real world. But they must somehow disclose (not necessarily be aware of) a deeper reality than that of the plane of most of our conscious living; and what they disclose must be, not the psychologist's intellectualisation of this reality, but the reality itself. (10)

To disclose the reality itself must, in the classical and formal sense, be to 'act' the reality itself. And as the words, given to them by the playwright, vary "between conventionalism and naturalism" (Bethell 17), so, too, does the player's action. In Hamlet there is no sign that the

First Player shows his histrionic ability when he is not performing.

Hamlet's "look you mock him not," as he sends the player after Polonius, is not an admonition of what the player is doing (as Polonius has already left the stage or is at least out of hearing) but of what the player is capable of doing.

Does the player, therefore, 'personate' or 'feign' the character which he is playing? Again in Hamlet, Polonius is afraid that the player is overly affected by his emotions and says, "look whe'er he has not turned his colour and has tears in's eyes. Prithee no more" (II.ii.515-16); while Hamlet knows the player is only feigning but he is envious that, in a "dream of passion," the player can give his individual thoughts or conceit physical expression. Gurr says,

This term, the noun 'personation', suggests that a relatively new art of individual characterisation had developed, an art distinct from the orator's display of passions or the academic actor's portrayal of the character-types. . . . (98)

This statement agrees with Donawerth's idea that the emphasis in acting theory shifted in 1600 towards characterization. Many critics, however, believe that 'personation' was impossible: M. C. Bradbrook suggests that the actor was "probably so well known to the audience that they only saw the character as a transparent cover to his own personality" (Themes and Conventions 105) and Michael Hattaway argues that the word 'personate' "did not at that period [c. 1600] lose the connotations it derived from its etymology (from the Latin persona, a mask) of the generic and the feigned. It did not imply singularity" (78). But William Worthen assures us of the player's ability to 'personate,' to identify completely with his role:

The Renaissance actor mirrors both his audience's attraction to creative feigning and its anxious regard for the deception of histrionic imitation. The drama represents the actor's double valuation with remarkable consistency. For the most part, role-playing in the plays requires a conscious commitment to acting, and always involves bridging the gap between the real and the fictitious. . . . We see the performer finally unable, as the Puritans might argue, to enforce the distinction between the "Personator" and the "man Personated," between himself and his mask. (67)

The deaths that occur on stage in The Spanish Tragedy and The Roman Actor are examples of the playwright's use of the possible indistinction between reality and fiction. The amateurs, playing parts which require them to 'kill' other characters, act out the murders in reality. However, these amateur players use dramatic convention--in this case, the actor's art of feigning--to hide from their victims their true intent. It is the audience which is unaware of the reality of the situation until it is explained. The Puritans, unable or unwilling to distinguish between the real and the fictitious, used much the same argument for the stage that critics of television and movies use today: the audience is so taken in by the performance that they believe fiction is reality and that they, too, can imitate such action. Tarleton, in Chettle's Kind-Hartes Dreame, puts forward the Puritan argument:

Fie vppon following plaies, the expence is wondrous; vpon players speeches, their wordes are full of wyles; vppon their gestures, that are altogether wanton. Is it not lamentable, that a man should spende his two pence on them in an after-

noone, heare couetousnes amongst them daily quipt at, being one of the commonest occupations in the countrey; and in liuely gesture see trecherie set out, with which euery man now adaies vseth to intrap his brother. Byr lady, this would be lookt into: if these be the fruites of playing, tis time the practisers were expeld. (39)

Tarleton, himself a player, continues with an explanation of his meaning:

Every thing hath in it selfe his vertue and his vice: from oneselfe flower the Bee and Spider sucke honny and poyson. In plaies it fares as in bookes, vice cannot be reprov'd, except it be discover'd: neither is it in any play discover'd, but there followes in the same an example of the punishment. . . . (42)

Tarleton's explanation represents one of the playwright's defences for the value of the drama and its practitioners.

The 'lively gesture' which provoked many attacks on the stage--not all by Puritans--also centred on the boys' portrayals of women. William Prynne in Histrio-Mastix damns the boys' impersonations of women because the Bible forbids men to wear women's clothing (Davies 14):

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God. (King James version, Deuteronomy 22: 5)

The skill of the boy-players is pointed out by Marvin Rosenberg when he refers to a spectator's account of a performance of Othello by the King's Men at Oxford in 1610:

They also had tragedies, well and effectively acted. In these they drew tears, not only by their speech, but also by their

action. Indeed Desdemona, killed by her husband, in her death moved us especially when, as she lay in her bed, her face alone implored the pity of the audience.⁶ (98)

Rosenberg says, "We can gauge the completeness of the illusion from the fact that the 'boy actor' himself is not even mentioned; Desdemona it is who was pitied" (98). This eye-witness account also provides evidence to refute the argument, put forward by many critics, that the acting style must have been formal because the boys would have been unable to achieve the natural style a well-trained adult might have been able to display were it not for the fact he had to perform with boys. Thomas Heywood advises both actors and orators not only to speak well but also to use "a gracious and a bewitching kinde of action":

And this is the action behooefull in any that professe this quality, not to vse any impudent or forced motion in any part of the body, no rough, or other violent gesture, nor on the contrary, to stand like a stiffe starcht man, but to qualifie every thing according to the nature of the person personated (14)

The greatest amount of contemporary evidence for a player's ability to 'personate' is found in the tributes and elegies to and witnesses' accounts of Richard Burbage's acting.

Burbage and Edward Alleyn were to the Renaissance stage what Roscius and Aesop were to the Roman stage. Both Burbage and Alleyn were compared favourably to Roscius, Alleyn in an Epigram by Jonson and Burbage in an Elegy:

To Edward Alleyn

If Rome so great and in her wisest age,

Fear'd not to boast the glories of her stage,
 A skilful Roscius, and grave Aesop, men,
 Yet crown'd with honours, as with riches, then,
 Who had no less a trumpet of their name,
 Than Cicero, whose every breath was fame.
 How can so great example die in me
 That, Alleyn, I should pause to publish thee
 Who both their graces in thyself has more
 Outstript, than they did all that went before,
 And present worth in all dost so contract
 As others speak, but only thou dost act.
 Wear this renown. 'Tis just, that who did give
 To many poets life, by one should live. (qtd. in Cole 83)

From an elegy on the death of Burbage:

He's gone and with him what a world are dead,
 Which he revived to be revived soe.
 No more young Hamlett, ould Heironymoe,
 Kind Lear, the greved Moore, and more beside,
 That lived in him, have now for ever dy'de.

.

England's great Roscius, for what Roscius
 Was more to Rome than Burbage was to us:
 How to ye person hee did suit his face,
 How did his speech become him, and his face
 Suit with his speech, whilst not a word did fall
 Without just weight to balance it withall . . . (qtd. in Cole 90-1)

Alleyn, however, was renowned for his "stalking and roaring" (Gurr 111),

his "grand, obliterating majesty" (Bradbrook, Common Player 136), and his "heavy and robustious" style (Harrison 48). Gurr offers as evidence for Alleyn's 'strut and bellow' action the fact that the Red Bull and Fortune theatres had a reputation for actors "who were terrible teare throats," as Edmund Gayton expressed it in 1654 (Gurr 110), and that these theatres inherited Alleyn's repertoire of parts (Gurr 111). Flecknoe, in his 'Character' Of a Proud [Wo]man, describes her as follows: "She looks high and speaks in a majestique Tone, like one playing the Queens part at the Bull" (qtd. in Gurr 111). Flecknoe, however, had this to say of Burbage:

. . . we may say that he was a delightful Proteus, so wholly transforming himself into his part, and putting off himself with his clothes, as he never (not so much as in the tiring-house) assum'd himself again until the play was done. . . .

(Cole 91)

As John Russell Brown also points out, this kind of absorption in a role is closer to the Stanislavski method of acting (49). If, as Bradbrook says, "Alleyn remained ever himself, and his career shows that he was as remarkable and forceful off the stage as on it" (Common Player 137), then Alleyn would be a good example of the actor's art of 'feigning,' while Burbage would be the prime example of the actor's art of 'personation.'

The Elizabethans, as had the Romans before them, saw a distinction between the orator and the player's ability to act "really." The orator, says Thomas Wright (The Passions of the Mind, 1604), is able to "stirre vp all sorts of passions according to the exigencie of the matter," while the player acts "fainedly . . . only to delight" (qtd. in Russell Brown 47). J. Cocke in 1615 described the common player as "a Rogue

errant, for his chiefe essence is, A daily Counterfeit" (ES 4: 255).

The arts of feigning and personation were brought together by the playwrights of the boys' companies when they "discovered a happy congruity between the boys' skills and [their] predilections for self-conscious artifice . . . (Reibetanz 97). For, as Shapiro says,

Given the obvious disparity between boy actor and adult character, the more natural the acting the more comic the incongruity between actor and character, for many actions natural in adults hardly seem natural when mirrored in children. Consequently, the verisimilitude of the language, setting, and character types in these satiric city comedies probably heightened this incongruity. . . . ("Children's Troupes" 51)

The boys in the induction to Antonio and Mellida discuss and practise the language of the character types they are to perform in the play. The boy who plays Forobosco, the parasite or flatterer, praises Alberto's speech about the character of a fool:

For. Ha, ha, ha; tolerably good; good, faith, sweet wag.

Alb. Umph; why "tolerably good; good, faith, sweet wag"?

Go, go; you flatter me.

For. Right; I but dispose my speech to the habit of my part. (40-3)

The boy playing Matzagente, a boaster, gives the others a taste of his performance with a few resounding poetic lines:

Fel. Rampum scrampum, mount tufty Tamburlaine! What rattling thunderclap breaks from his lips?

Alb. O, 'tis native to his part. For acting a modern Bragadoch under the person of Matzagente, the Duke of Milan's son, it may seem to suit with good fashion of coherence. (86-90)

The parts of the Duke, the fool, the flatterer, and the braggart are easily identifiable types, but the part of Antonio is far more complex. The boy is worried that he will not be able to clarify his character for the audience:

Ant. For unless I were possess'd with a legion of spirits 'tis impossible to be made perspicuous by any utterance. . . .

'T'ad been a right part for Proteus or Gew; ho, blind Gew would ha' done't rarely, rarely. (115-17, 130-31)

The boy intimates that he has not the ability to act so many changes of type in one character, but a 'blind performing baboon' would ape the part extremely well. We do not know whether the boy performed the part of Antonio as Proteus or "blind Gew." However formal or natural the acting style, it seems the question of whether the player feigned or personated the character he was performing is largely a matter of the method and deployment of technique.

All actors, by the very nature of their profession, feign or pretend to be the character they are playing. They are not the characters they play, although some actors might play characters whose personalities or characteristics are so close to their own that to an audience they seem to be the characters they are playing. As I have already said, I believe that acting styles are dependent upon the place of playing; I also believe they are dependent upon the audience to whom the actors are playing and that the acting styles of modern actors do not differ radically from those of the Renaissance players. The difference lies in the nature of the theatre buildings and their audiences. There are some excellent actors who, with their highly skilled technique, can submerge themselves totally into the characters they play--Laurence Olivier and Peter Sellers,

for example—while there are other excellent actors who, again using technique, can make an audience believe in the total credibility of the characters they play, although they never lose their own identity—Alec Guinness and Derek Jacobi, for example. To judge how well and in what way the Renaissance player used his technique, we must turn to the player character in the plays, both in rehearsal and performance.

2. PRESENTATION: Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.
(Hamlet III.ii)

The Renaissance actor on the public stage "stood in broad daylight, surrounded by his audience (an audience sometimes inclined to rowdiness and occasionally to riot) and supported only by elaborate costume, the architecture of the stage, and his own ability to hold a crowd. . . . Here all that matters is the power of the actor to create his own vivid moment of feeling" (Orrell 67). The ability to hold an unruly or attentive crowd requires training and what better training could the players have than the opportunity to watch and work with the best of the quality? Once an actor is well trained it is possible for him to play any part with or without rehearsal time. His power lies within himself and is not dependent upon whether or not he is given a part suitable only for himself, or in his 'line.'

Several critics, acknowledging the speed with which a play had to be prepared, have proposed that each actor had his own 'line' of parts. "It is a ready presumption," says Gurr, "that each player was allocated the part in each new play that most closely suited his talents . . . so if one player left the company, his successor would have to take over all his abandoned parts, and would therefore be admitted to the company on the understanding that his 'line' matched that of the departed player" (103). The distinction seen between Will Kempe's parts and those of Robert Armin, whose arrival as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men coincides with Kempe's departure, refutes this argument. J. A. B. Somerset, in his article "Shakespeare's Great Stage of Fools," presents evidence to show that Armin was compared to Tarleton, whose successor was Will Kempe (72). It must also be remembered that apart from Armin's performance

of new roles, such as Touchstone and Feste, he would also have to perform those roles which were Kempe's, such as Peter in Romeo and Juliet and Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing.⁷ Somerset poses a very relevant question: "Is it not also risky to assume that an actor easily plays all parts of the role he is given or that he can play nothing else?" (73).

As Gurr himself says:

The illness or absence of a single player could not be allowed to stop the company performing, of course, and other players must have been capable of taking over a fellow's 'line' at short notice. (103)

Bernard Beckerman agrees with Thomas Baldwin's theory of an actor's 'line' regarding the fact that the same actors would play the lead parts regularly but Beckerman disagrees with the concept of 'lines.' The evidence points more to the variety of roles one player might perform.

Also, because of hasty rehearsals and lack of opportunity to repeat roles frequently, critics assume that players had a stock of conventional gestures they used, had little chance to portray depth of emotion, and had more than enough to do remembering the words. The fact that actors learned their parts from 'sides'--texts which have only one character's part written with cue words or lines--also indicates "a type of acting which emphasized the individual performer, minimized his relationship to the other actors, and placed great emphasis upon the delivery of speeches" (Beckerman 132). This is not necessarily true. Any company of well trained actors who have worked together for a considerable length of time can demonstrate great rapport on stage even if each actor has learned his lines in isolation, and as long as an actor knows the lines and has a 'feel' for the part he can substitute for another actor in a company

he has not worked with in a matter of hours. The fact that "various plays testify to the scorn of the playwright for the actor who is out of his part" (Beckerman 130), does not testify to the fact that they often were. I have earlier suggested that one characteristic the professional and amateur player shares is that they can be 'put out' of their parts by the audience, but it is more often the amateur who stops the performance because he has forgotten his lines or his next action, while the audience or intruding messenger stops the professional's performance. The plays in Hamlet, Sir Thomas More, The Roman Actor, and The Mayor of Queenborough are all stopped by the audience, while in Brome's The Antipodes, it is Peregrine, an unwitting participant in the play-within-a-play, who puts a player out. The Doctor had hoped to cure Peregrine's madness using the play performed by Lord Letoy's players but, thinking he is a king, Peregrine gives the player permission to go before he can perform his next action, which is to "bribe the constable." In The Roman Actor, Domitia is moved by Paris's feeling when he plays an unrequited lover:

Domit. Do's he not act it rarely?

Obserue with what a feeling he deliuers

His orisions to Cupid; I am rap'd with't.

. . . .

By Caesars life he weepes. And I forbear

Hardly to keepe him companie. (III.ii.175-77, 196-97)

Polonius in Hamlet is moved by the player's countenance and the tears in his eyes to halt the speech. "'Tis well," says Hamlet. Whether the player himself felt the emotion the character Aeneas felt, we shall never know, but the fact that he had the technical ability to portray depth of

emotion is left in no doubt:

Ham. Is it not monstrous that this player here,
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
 Could force his soul so to his own conceit
 That from her working all his visage wann'd,
 Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
 With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing! (II.ii.545-51)

Nowhere in other plays do we find reference to the player in Hamlet being put out of his part. As for using stock gestures, the players probably did, although we cannot be sure that they used them in a conventional way and the many references to the life-like personations suggest that what conventional gestures they did use for character type and emotion were presented in a natural way. In The Taming of the Shrew, the Lord remembers one of the players for his excellent portrayal of a farmer's eldest son:

'Twas where you woo'd the gentlewoman so well.
 I have forgot your name; but, sure, that part
 Was aptly fitted and naturally perform'd. (Ind.i.83-5)

Natural performance of a part does not always depend upon a written text. The player, when he extemporizes, must be confident that his technique will enable him to improvise not only words but suitable action as well. Too much reliance on conventional stock gestures would more likely hinder his performance than in-depth character portrayal. Whatever situation the character might then find himself in, the player will instinctively know what to say and how to act. Once Alvarez is given the plot of the play they are to extemporize in The Spanish Gipsy, he distributes the

parts and sends two of his number to 'bespeak' the necessary properties, while he employs his brains "to set things off to th'life" (IV.ii.97). Hasty rehearsals (if such was always the case) and the lack of repetition of roles does not seem to diminish the player's ability to give an excellent performance.

A modern rehearsal begins with the actors, whose roles have already been assigned, being instructed by the director regarding his ideas on the overall direction of the production and on the characterization of the roles. The Renaissance players had no directors, but they had playwrights and others who were eager to give instruction and advice. Johannes Rhenanus gives an account in 1613 of his impressions of English players:

So far as the actors are concerned they, as I have noticed in England, are daily instructed as it were in a school, so that even the most eminent actors have to allow themselves to be taught their places by the dramatists, and this gives life and ornament to a well-written play, so that it is no wonder that the English players (I speak of skilled ones) surpass others and have the advantage over them. (qtd. in Hattaway 53)

Peter Thomson, in his book Shakespeare's Theatre, suggests that "the positions on stage were not 'blocked' as they come to be in the modern theatre. The physical on-stage relationships of characters were decided by tradition--the Peacham drawing suggests as much--so that a socially inferior character would assume automatically his customary place on the platform" (116). I should think that the star-system of the Renaissance stage would also dictate stage positions. A minor actor playing a minor role would never up-stage a famous actor with a lead role. The theatre's hierarchy would have been as important as that of the social classes

reflected by the characters on stage. Whether or not every company had a playwright to direct their moves, the players seem to have accepted the casting choices made by the chief sharer, manager, or producer. In 2 Return from Parnassus, Burbage and Kempe audition two scholars for their company. The scholars are asked to act a part from a book, so that Burbage "may see what will fit [them] best" (IV.iv.1803). Training by imitation and observation of the masters seems evident when Burbage tells Studioso to "observe how I act it and then imitate mee" (IV.iv.1804-05). Kempe tells Philomusus after his audition:

Thou wilt do well in time, if thou wilt be ruled by
thy betters, that is, by my selfe, and such graue Aldermen
of the playhouse as I am. (IV.iv.1832-34)

Bottom, who has asked to play all the parts offered in the interlude, urges no more when Quince finally tells him:

You can play no part but Pyramus: for Pyramus is a sweet-faced
man; a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day; a most
lovely, gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play
Pyramus. (MND I.ii.79-82)

Quince's diplomatic flattery quiets the extrovert actor. However, in The Spanish Tragedy, the playwright in Hieronimo momentarily gets the better of the diplomatic producer and places his plan for revenge in jeopardy:

Hier. When in Toledo there I studied,
It was my chance to write a tragedy,
See here my lords,
Which long forgot, I found this other day.
Nor would your lordships favour me so much
As but to grace me with your acting it--

I mean each one of you to play a part--

Assure you it will prove most passing strange

And wondrous plausible to that assembly.

Bal. What, would you have us play a tragedy?

Hier. Why Nero thought it no disparagement,

And kings and emperors have ta'en delight

To make experience of their wits in plays!

Lor. Nay, be not angry, good Hieronimo,

The prince but asked a question. (IV.i.77-91)

Even though Balthazar does not like the idea of playing a tragedy, and likes even less the idea of playing in foreign languages, he is persuaded by Lorenzo:

Bal. [aside to Lorenzo.] How like you this?

Lor. Why thus, my lord,

We must resolve to soothe his humours up. (IV.i.190-92)

Once the main characters have been cast in Women Beware Women, those of Juno for Livia and the nymph for Isabella, Guardiano offers Hippolito a choice:

Guard. For our parts, we'll not be ambitious, sir;

Please you walk in, and see the project drawn,

Then take your choice.

Hip. I weigh not, so I have one. (IV.ii.226-29)

In revenge tragedy, the principal revenger picks his or her part, which is usually the lead role or one of the leading dancers in a masque. In the comedies, the arrangers of the amateur entertainments usually do not perform (as, for example, Basiolo in The Gentleman Usher), or if they do, they speak the prologue or act as the presenter (as Quince does in The

Dream, Follywit in A Mad World, My Masters, and the Poet in A Jovial Crew).

Holofernes, who casts the pageant in Love's Labour's Lost, is in some respects similar to Bottom. It is Armado who has been asked to present a show and craves the assistance of the schoolmaster and curate. The schoolmaster, Holofernes, immediately takes over, tells them what to present and who shall play which part. Armado does not regain control until after the casting is done:

Hol. . . . I say, none so fit as to present the Nine Worthies.

Nath. Where will you find men worthy enough to present them?

Hol. Joshua, yourself; [myself and] this gallant gentleman, Judas Maccabaeus; this swain, because of his great limb or joint, shall pass Pompey the Great; the page, Hercules--

Arm. Pardon, sir; error: he is not quantity enough for that Worthy's thumb: he is not so big as the end of his club.

Hol. Shall I have audience? he shall present Hercules in minority: his enter and exit shall be strangling a snake; and I will have an apology for that purpose.

Moth. An excellent device! so if any of the audience hiss, you may cry "Well done, Hercules! now thou crushest the snake!" That is the way to make an offence gracious, though few have the grace to do it.

Arm. For the rest of the Worthies?

Hol. I will play three myself.

Moth. Thrice-worthy gentleman!

Arm. Shall I tell you a thing?

Hol. We attend.

Arm. We will have, if this fadge not, an antic. I beseech you,

follow. (V.i.118-42)

In the theatre the professional players "are daily instructed," probably working on the old plays as well as the new. When we meet the professionals they are 'on tour' and already know which parts they are playing in the repertoire of plays they carry.

With their parts in hand, the players concern themselves with characterization. The boy playing Piero in Marston's Antonio and Mellida answers for the players when asked in they are ready:

Faith, we can say our parts; but we are ignorant in what
mold we must cast our actors. (Ind.3-4)

A more experienced actor would shape his 'mold' as he learned the words. Even after Alberto has given Piero sound advice on how to match thought and action in 'personation' of a duke, Piero reduces interior characterization to coarse external show:

Alb. O, ho; then thus frame your exterior shape
To haughty form of elate majesty
As if you held the palsy-shaking head
Of reeling chance under your fortune's belt
In strictest vassalage; grow big in thought
As swoll'n with glory of successful arms.

Pier. If that be all, fear not, I'll suit it right.

Who cannot be proud, stroke up the hair and strut? (Ind.7-14)

I do not altogether agree with Michael Hattaway, who says that "Marston's insistence on the 'exterior shape' reminds us that characters may be built not from a theory of an individual's psychology but from without . . . [and in] practice this means that modern actors attempting Renaissance parts might try to banish from their minds the notions of character that

are associated with naturalistic drama. . . " (78). The English actor is still trained in an outer to inner technique—which does mean that a character is built from without—but his individual psychology is also part of the building process and a social role, such as a duke, brings with it a "'proper office', which its occupant must learn to uphold" (Van Laan 17). Alberto stresses the importance of the character's thought, which Piero, the novice actor, cannot grasp. Marston seems to be parodying bad acting or a particular style of acting, not Renaissance acting technique in general. G. K. Hunter, in his introduction to Antonio and Mellida, is following Shapiro's argument, that there is an "obvious disparity between boy actor and adult character" ("Children's Troupes" 51), when he speaks of Marston "exploiting the 'passionate' style as an already established mode" and being "certainly conscious of the discrepancy between the boys' natural range and the texture he was asking them to work in" (xvii). The verisimilitude of character types heightened this incongruity, according to Shapiro, but Hunter believes that

the clash of opposites can produce more than comedy. Antonio and Mellida asks us to see the matter of court intrigue as at once passionately serious and absurdly pointless; and there is no good ground for supposing that Marston thought one of these viewpoints more basic than the other. A modern play like Waiting for Godot should remind us that the tragic and the absurd may belong together. (xvii)

A modern play requires modern acting and, as Hunter says, Marston's "characteristic ambivalence of outlook" (xvii) made him a modern Elizabethan. Marston's contemporaries found fault with his writing style, but

[i]t is one of Marston's reiterated critical points that the life of drama lies in theatrical performance; and some at least of the oddities of his expression can be explained as attempts to communicate his vision in terms which would be theatrically expressive, even if not valuable as book-literature. (Hunter xviii)

Evidence of Marston's style does not, of course, offer irrefutable evidence of a modern acting style. The boys might not have had the ability to perform the roles in the way Marston envisaged but, on the other hand, they did not have the training that the boys in the professional adult companies had. The fact that Marston did write in this way must presuppose the possibility of successful performance. Alberto, who is playing two parts, has no patience for the boy who thinks he cannot play Antonio and the Amazon (Antonio's disguise) at the same time:

Ant. I was never worse fitted since the nativity of my actorship;
I shall be hiss'd at, on my life now.

Fel. Why, what must you play?

Ant. Faith, I know not what, an hermaphrodite, two parts in one;
my true person being Antonio son to the Duke of Genoa, though
for the love of Mellida, Piero's daughter, I take this feigned
presence of an Amazon, calling myself Florizel and I know not
what. I a voice to play a lady! I shall ne'er do it.

Alb. O, an Amazon should have such a voice, virago-like. Not play
two parts in one? away, away; 'tis common fashion. Nay, if
you cannot bear two subtle fronts under one hood, idiot go by,
off this world's stage. O time's impurity! (Ind.65-76)

It is interesting that assuming a disguise is here called taking a "feigned presence" while acting one role is taking a "true person." Hamlet's

attitude to the player assuming the role of Aeneas and feigning passions is similar. The boys, of course, could not be seen to truly personate the adult characters they played. Feliche makes clear the short-comings of his technical ability:

But I have a part allotted me which I have neither able
apprehension to conceit nor what I conceit gracious ability
to utter. (Ant. & Mell. Ind.99-101)

After Feliche's exposition of his character's "vein," Alberto does not offer any technical advice but exits, leaving the others to bemoan the impossibility of their task. Lord Letoy in The Antipodes has certain expectations of the abilities of his men and boys of quality and casts his play accordingly. The actor Byplay, "that never will be perfect in a thing / He studies" (II.i.16-7), is given the chance to play extempore, performing particular characters without a script. Lord Letoy admits Byplay "moves mirth in me 'bove all the rest" and as long as "he can fribble through, and move delight / In others, I am pleas'd" (II.i.19-24). As Thomson points out, Byplay "is a good actor because he knows 'the purpose what he is to speak to'" (117) even if he cannot remember his lines:

Let. [To Byplay.] But you, sir, are incorrigible, and
Take license to yourself to add unto
Your parts your own free fancy, and sometimes
To alter or diminish what the writer
With care and skill compos'd; and when you are
To speak to your coactors in the scene,
You hold interlocutions with the audients--
By. That is a way, my lord, has bin allow'd
On elder stages to move mirth and laughter.

Let. Yes, in the days of Tarlton and Kemp,
 Before the stage was purg'd from barbarism,
 And brought to the perfection it now shines with.

. Let that pass.

Tonight I'll give thee leave to try thy wit
 In answering my doctor and his patient

He brings along with him to our Antipodes. (II.ii.39-56)

Here, thirty-eight years later, are echoes of Hamlet's

. . . let those that play your clowns speak no more than is
 set down for them--for there be of them that will themselves
 laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh
 too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the
 play be then to be considered. (III.ii.38-43)

In 1985 this kind of actor is still performing, as are practitioners of
 a more naturalistic style of acting.

We rarely see a rehearsal of the entertainment to be performed later
 in the plays, but the instructions given to players prior to performance
 inform us of what we might or might not expect. Such advice also informs
 us of the current theatrical practices of some players. Amorphus in
 Jonson's Cynthia's Revels is not a player but he gives Asotus advice on
 how to act the gallant before his lady. He tells him what moves to make,
 how to enter, and what emotions would be appropriate:

A little more forward: so, sir. Now go in, discloak yourself,
 and come forth. . . .

'Tis well entered, sir. Stay, you come on too fast; your pace
 is too impetuous. Imagine this to be the palace of your pleasure,
 or place where your lady is pleased to be seen. First, you

present yourself, thus: and spying her, you fall off, and walk some two turns; in which time, it is supposed, your passion hath sufficiently whited your face: then, stifling a sigh or two, and closing your lips, with a trembling boldness and bold terror, you advance yourself forward. Prove thus much, I pray you. (III.v.1-11)

Asotus assures Amorphus that when he actually meets the lady his performance will be better than the rehearsal. Hamlet stresses the importance of moderation in performance. Over-acting or 'hamming' a part, overstepping "the modesty of nature . . . is

from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone or come tardy off, though it makes the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others.

(III.ii.20-8)

The purpose of playing, in other words, is to give pleasure to a discerning audience. Bottom's advice is more practical although the purpose is similar:

And most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. (MND IV.ii.39-42)

Bottom also advises the players to prepare their costumes and learn their lines:

Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps . . . every man look o'er his part . . .

let Thisbe have clean linen. . . . (MND IV.ii.33-7)

Nor does Bottom forget the importance of the physical appearance suiting the character:

. . . and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. (MND IV.ii.38-9)

Many of the advisors deplore the exhibition of the player's personal physical habits on stage. Lord Letoy admonishes two of his players for their practices:

And you, sir, you had got a trick of late
Of holding out your bum in a set speech,
Your fingers fibulating on your breast
As if your buttons or your band-strings were
Helps to your memory. Let me see you in't
No more, I charge you. No, nor you, sir, in
That over-action of the legs I told you of,
Your singles and your doubles. Look you, thus--
Like one o'th' dancing masters o'the Bear Garden.
And when you have spoke, at end of every speech,
Not minding the reply, you turn you round
As tumblers do, when betwixt every feat
They gather wind by firking up their breeches.
I'll none of these absurdities in my house,
But words and action married so together
That shall strike harmony in the ears and eyes
Of the severest, if judicious, critics. (Antipodes II.ii.21-37)

More echoes of Hamlet's "suit the action to the word, the word to the action." At least the abominable imitation of humanity which is 'reformed

indifferently' with the players in Hamlet is 'corrected' by Lord Letoy's players. Thirty-eight years of theatrical experience has had some effect on the player's art, even though the bad habits still exist. But untrained, negligent, or bad actors will always find something to do with their bodies even when the action is totally out of character. They will "saw the air too much with [their] hands" (Hamlet III.ii.4-5) or "stroake [their] beardes to make action, play with [their] cod-piece poynts, or stād fumbling on [their] buttons, when [they] know not how to bestow [their] fingers" (Summers Last Will and Testament lines 100-02).

To what practical use does the player put all this advice? The player of the Pyrrhus speech in Hamlet has already shown us how well he is able to suit the action to the word.⁸ Even though his passion is feigned, "the actor's physical expression is nonetheless alarmingly potent; had he Hamlet's motive and cue, he would be a man of overwhelming, maddening power" (Worthen 229). During the performance of "The Mousetrap," the actor playing Lucianus is told by Hamlet to "leave thy damnable faces and begin. Come, the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge" (III.ii.247-48). Hamlet's impatient interruption has been taken as a sign that the player has not reformed the habit of 'mouthing' his words.⁹ However, Hamlet has not only continued conversing with Ophelia while the actor waits to begin his speech but Hamlet is eager, maybe over-eager, to see Claudius's reaction to the nephew poisoner. It could be his own excessive behaviour which Hamlet reacts to and not the player's. In Middleton and Rowley's The Spanish Gipsy, Fernando praises Alvarez's performance. Fernando told Alvarez, in the role of Don Averro, to "be a Don / Of a brave spirit":

Fer. . . . Old gipsy, observe me--

Alv. Yes, my lord.

Fer. Play him up high; not like a pantaloon,
 But hotly, nobly, checking this his son,
 Whom make a very rake-hell, a debosh'd fellow.

This point, I think, will show well. (IV.ii.63-7)

"Well done, old fellow!" cries Fernando during the presentation. In The Roman Actor, Domitia arranges a tragedy for Caesar's pleasure and instructs the actors herself, not only on how to act but also how to appear. When Paris enters, Domitia asks Caesar:

. . . how doe you like
 That shape? me thinkes it is most sutable
 To the aspect of a despairing louer.
 The seeming late falne, counterfeited teares
 That hang vpon his cheekes, was my deuice. (III.ii.148-52)

Paris, however, acts so "rarely" that real tears flow and Domitia is "transported" by his performance:

Let me Sir,
 Intreate your pardon, what I saw presented
 Carried me beyond my selfe. (III.ii.288-89)

Domitia finds she has fallen in love with Paris in the role of the lover. Paris tries to explain to her that he is not what he seems on stage:

Dom. We could wish
 That we could credit thee, and cannot find
 In reason but that thou whom oft I haue seene
 To personate a Gentleman, noble, wise,
 Faithfull, and gainsome, and what vertues else
 The Poet pleases to adorne you with
 (But that as vessels still pertake the odour

Of the sweete pretious liquors they contain'd)
 Thou must be reallie in some degree
 The thing thou dost present. . . .

Par.

The argument

Is the same great Augusta, that I acting,
 A foole, a coward, a traytor or cold cinique
 Or any other weake, and vitious person
 Of force I must be such. O gracious Madam,
 How glorious soeuer, or deform'd,
 I doe appeare in the Scaene, my part being ended,
 And all my borrowed ornaments put off,
 I am no more, nor lesse then what I was
 Before I enter'd. (IV.ii.31-52)

Domitia will not be persuaded and when Caesar discovers them together, he is forced to kill Paris. Not many players would envy Paris's royal command performance! Although the players could be imprisoned for acting in plays which gave offence, such as The Isle of Dogs in 1597 and the Isle of Gulls in 1606, they were not likely to be arrested for giving an excellent performance.

The degree of excellence in a player's performance depends, therefore, on several factors: his own technical ability to 'feign' or 'personate,' his "borrowed ornaments"—costume and make-up, his text or plot, and his playing place. In the plays, with or without the support of elaborate costume and theatrical architecture, the player character has the power "to create his own vivid moment of feeling."

STAGING

This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action, as we will do it before the Duke. (MND III.i)

Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream is a play which was performed possibly at Court and probably in a large hall and the public theatre. In any of these playing places, Shakespeare offers the audience the illusion of the wood outside Athens and then the players turn the wood back into a theatre or playing place. For Bottom and company the semblance or illusion of a theatre space is necessary for their rehearsal. The player characters in other plays perform at Court, in large halls, in the open air, in private houses, and in private theatres. The Renaissance player was used to playing in a variety of performing areas but, wherever he was, setting and costumes would have an effect on him and his audience.

Inside his "gorgeous Playing place" (John Stockwood, 1578, ES 4:200), "pranked and decked vp in [his] gorgious and sumptuous apparell" (John Northbrooke, 1577, ES 4: 199), the player performed before a paying audience. Outside the theatre, the player was less certain of his reception and remuneration. Glynne Wickham has shown that during the years 1570-1610 the leading players and playmakers were involved in the preparation of various open-air performances, such as entertainments for the Queen's Progresses, Lord Mayor's Shows, Receptions, Tilts, Pageants, Royal Entries, and plays. These performances were not restricted to a particular social class, nor did the spectators pay to watch them--they were financed "by a private patron or from public funds" (EES 2.1: 176). The settings designed and erected for many of these performances were

elaborate and the effect must have been visually spectacular. Indoors, the great halls, in private houses or at Court, could be made equally spectacular. Inigo Jones's designs for costumes and settings for the masques at the Court of King James I illustrate the splendour and extravagance of these entertainments and the stage directions and eye-witness accounts of the masques are testimony to the lavish presentation of such spectacles.

What conditions could the player expect and what adaptations would be necessary in his performance in these various settings with such various kinds of entertainment? Glynne Wickham has found that more dramatic performances were given indoors both before and after the Theatre opened in 1576, and the most popular playing place was the town hall for performances outside London. In The Mayor of Queenborough the players arrive at the mayor's residence to ask permission to perform in the town hall. The far or upper end of the hall was where the stage was normally situated or erected and candlelight was provided (EES 2.1: 184). A similar situation prevailed in the great halls or chambers, in court or in private houses. The stage area was positioned against the screen or partition between the hall and the kitchen and the players made use of the screen doors during their performance. Wickham and other scholars believe that the staging of interludes and plays in halls or private chambers did not differ radically from the revels at court or performances in the public or private theatres (EES 2.1: 200). The public and private theatres could not compete with entertainments of such size and expense as those offered at court; nevertheless, masques, pageants, interludes, entries, and plays are represented in the plays written for the theatres.

The setting of Richard Brome's The Antipodes is Lord Letoy's house,

but as the townsmen say of the Lord, that he looks "more like a pedlar / Than like a lord, and live[s] more like an emperor" (I.v.28-9), so Blaze says of his house, that "in substance [it] is an amphitheater / Of exercise and pleasure" (I.v.53-4). The 'amphitheater' of this Lord, whose servants are players, is equipped with stage and tiring house. At one point in the play, Peregrine, the "mad young gentleman" whom they are trying to cure of his madness, is reported to have got into the tiring house:

By. He has got into our tiring house amongst us,
 And ta'en a strict survey of all our properties:
 Our statues and our images of gods, our planets and our
 constellations,
 Our giants, monsters, furies, beasts, and bugbears,
 Our helmets, shields, and vizors, hairs, and beards,
 Our pasteboard marchpanes, and our wooden pies. (III.vi.3-8)

Lord Letoy's house is stocked nearly as well as Philip Henslowe's theatre (cf. Henslowe's inventory lists in his *Diary and Papers*). Letoy's players must have felt as much at 'home' on their stage as the Queen's Players felt on theirs at Salisbury Court, where the play was first performed in 1638, and maybe there was as much confusion backstage:

Let. Go fetch 'em then, while I prepare my actors.

Within there ho!

1 (within). This is my beard and hair.

2 (within). My lord appointed it for my part.

3 (within). No, this is for you; and this is yours, this gray one.

4 (within). Where be the foils and targets for the women?

1 (within). Here, can't you see?

Let. What a rude coil is there! But yet it pleases me.

1 (within). You must not wear that cloak and hat.

2 (within). Who told you? I must

In my first scene, and you must wear that robe.

Let. What a noise make those knaves! Come in, one of you.

(II.i.45-56)

It is remarkable that the players' performance shows no sign of this 'rude coil,' but then, as Quintilian says, "the first object of [art] should be that it may not appear to be art" (26).

In Marston's Jack Drum's Entertainment, there is violence in the tiring house, although we do not see the action. In the introduction the "Tyer-man" enters and tells the audience that

. . . hee that composde the Booke, we should present, hath done us very vehement wrong, he hath snatched it from us, upon the very instance of entrance, and with violence keeps the boyes from comming on the Stage. So God helpe me, if we wrong your delights, tis infinitely against our endeavours, unles we should make a tumult in the Tyring-house.

The play, written for the children of Paul's and printed in 1601, uses the introduction as an apology to the audience for the defects of the playwright and players, for his lack of a prologue and the boys' lack of perfection, and to assure the audience that the playwright and players mean only to give them pleasure. One of the children addresses the audience on the playwright's behalf:

Heele give us passage, & you pleasing soeanes,
And vowes not to torment your listning eares
With mouldy fopperies of stale Poetry,

Unpossible drie mustie Fictions:

And for our parts to gratifie your favour,

Weele studie till our cheekes looke wan with care,

That you our pleasures, we your loves may share.

The inductions to many of the plays written for children's companies show the boy players as themselves in the theatre, drawing attention to the fact that the play which follows is performed by children playing adults and the disparity between player and character must constantly be kept in mind. The induction to Jonson's Cynthia's Revels is similar to Marston's in that one of the boys, pretending to be a member of the audience, criticizes poets' use of "stale, apophthegms or old books they can hear of (in print, or otherwise) to farce their scenes withal" (Ind.163-64). These boys, however, are not 'troubled' by the poet backstage. Asked by the third boy where the author is, the second boy replies:

Not this way, I assure you, sir: we are not so officiously befriended by him as to have his presence in the tiring-house, to prompt us aloud, stamp at the book-holder, swear for our properties, curse the poor tire-man, rail the music out of tune, and sweat for every venial trespass we commit, as some author would, if he had such fine ingles as we. Well, 'tis but our hard fortune. (Ind.148-53)

The boy players appear to have suffered backstage whether or not the playwright was there.

The induction to The Malcontent and possibly the play The Knight of the Burning Pestle were written for adults and are also set in the theatre. Marston's Malcontent was originally written for and performed by the Children of the Queen's Revels at Blackfriars and Webster's

induction, with its adult player characters, was added when the King's Men performed the play in 1604. Beaumont and Fletcher's play was not necessarily written for boys--it was, as Walter Burre's dedication explains, "exposed to the wide world, who for want of judgement, or not understanding the privy marke of Ironie about it (which shewed it was no of-spring of any vulgar braine) utterly rejected it"--but it was eventually accepted by Robert Kaysar for the Children of the Queen's Revels and the induction makes reference to performance by boy players in a private theatre.

Plays and other entertainments within plays are performed usually at court or in the house of a lord or 'honourable personage.' A court can command a performance by its own troupe of professional players, if it has one, or by a group of amateurs (with or without professional help) assembled and rehearsed for a specific occasion. The professional players in The Roman Actor, who enjoy Caesar's protection and patronage, must be ready to perform any play, any time, at Caesar's request; and they are ready. Paris, under sentence of death for consorting with Caesar's wife, insists that Caesar show him no mercy. Caesar asks Paris if he remembers a tragedy called the False Servant. "Such a one we haue Sir," is the reply.

Cae. And what

Didst thou play in it?

Par. The false seruant Sir.

Cae. Thou didst indeed. Do the Players waite without?

Par. They doe Sir and prepar'd to act the storie

Your Majestie mention'd. (IV.ii.218-21)

Paris had been caught alone with Domitia and yet, with no prior warning or time for preparation, the company is ready to perform the requested

play. Aesop even has the property sword at hand, which Caesar refuses to use in the role of the injured lord:

Cae. This cloake, and hat without
 Wearing a beard, or other propertie
 Will fit the person. (IV.ii.226-28)

Caesar's decision to use his own unblunted sword provokes Latinus, "a Boy drest for a Ladie," to ask Aesop, whose role Caesar assumed, "In the name of wonder / What's Caesars purpose?" (IV.ii.239-40). Caesar's purpose is, of course, to kill Paris. He tells the fatally wounded Paris,

. . . . as thou didst liue
 Romes brauest Actor, 'twas my plot that thou
 Shouldst dye in action, and to crowne it dye
 With an applause induring to all times,
 By our imperiall hand. (IV.ii.296-300)

At court an actor must be ready for anything, for there is no knowing what might happen. The accounts of the entertainments at the English court do not record technical disasters; although, with the amount of elaborate and complicated sets involved, there must have been some.

The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn by Francis Beaumont was the last of three masques performed to honour the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine in February 1613. After the masquers' procession by boat from Southwark to Whitehall, the masque was postponed. The published Quarto gives crowding in the Great Hall as the excuse for the postponement, which greatly disappointed the masquers, "their devices and apparel now being known" (Edwards, Book of Masques 130), but John Chamberlain, in a letter of 18 February 1613, offers further explanation:

but the worst of all was that the King was so wearied

and sleepe with sitting up almost two whole nights before,
 that he had no edge to yt, wherupon Sir Fra Bacon adventured
 to intreat his Majestie, that by this disgrace he wold not as
 yt were bury them quicke: and I hear the King shold aunswer,
 that then they must burie him quicke for he could last no
 longer. . . . (qtd. in Edwards, Book of Masques 130)

The masque which was to be given on 16 February in the Great Hall was performed on 20 February in the Banqueting House. The change of playing place did not give much time for the re-setting of fountains, mountains, clouds, and pavilions for the Knights. The second anti-masque so pleased his Majesty that he called "for it again at the end, as he did likewise for the first anti-masque, but one of the Statues by that time was undressed" (Beaumont 139). The expense of this masque for the Inns was enormous and "on 4 May the records of a parliament note that the house was in debt over the masque 'not so little as 1,200 li.'" (Edwards, Book of Masques 128).

The cost of the masque in Women Beware Women is born by Livia, who, with Guardiano, has reasons other than the celebration of the Duke's nuptials for financing such an elaborate entertainment. As Guardiano tells her:

Here's an occasion offerred that gives anger
 Both liberty and safety to perform
 Things worth the fire it holds, without the fear
 Of danger, or of law; for mischiefs acted
 Under the privilege of a marriage-triumph
 At the Duke's hasty nuptials, will be thought
 Things merely accidental--all's by chance,

Not got of their own natures. (IV.ii.159-66)

Guardiano is himself the victim of an accident! He arranges with Ward to set a spiked instrument under a trap-door and, on a given signal, Ward is to open the trap so that Hippolito will fall to his death. Unfortunately, Guardiano falls through the trap-door instead. The 'mischiefs' that the other players have arranged for each other quite destroy the original argument or plot, which the Duke is trying to follow. Livia, as Juno, throws "flaming gold" upon Isabella who falls dead and the Duke remarks, "She falls down upon't, / What's the conceit of that? . . . This swerves a little from the argument . . . " (V.ii.118-23). When Guardiano goes through the trap, the Duke says, "Why, sure this plot's drawn false, here's no such thing" (V.ii.129), and when Livia asks to be let down because she is poisoned by the rising incense smoke and Hippolito is shot by the Cupids' poisoned arrows, the Duke is totally confused: "I have lost myself in this quite" (V.ii.142), he says. The 'taking out' custom at the end of the masque is here literally performed: the Duke is also mistakenly poisoned by the drink Bianca intended for the Cardinal. Bianca, distraught, takes her own life. If, as Leah Sinanoglou Marcus suggests, the court masques of the early Stuart period, "had begun to perform their own delicately subversive maneuvers" (13), then Middleton's masque-within-the-play, dated approximately 1620, is extremely convincing in its 'subversive maneuvers.'

Hieronimo, in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, has motives similar to those of Livia and Guardiano for his ready agreement to prepare an entertainment for Balthazar's father, the Viceroy of Portugal, at the Spanish court:

Bethink thyself, Hieronimo,

Recall thy wits, recompt thy former wrongs

Thou hast receiv'd by murder of thy son,
 And lastly, not least, how Isabel,
 Once his mother and thy dearest wife,
 All woe-begone for him hath slain herself.
 Behoves thee then, Hieronimo, to be reveng'd:
 The plot is laid of dire revenge:
 On then, Hieronimo, pursue revenge,

For nothing wants but acting of revenge. (IV.iii.21-30)

At the beginning of the scene prior to the performance, Hieronimo "knocks up the curtain" and tells Balthazar to "bring a chair and a cushion for the king" (IV.iii.16). The curtain serves both as a background against which the court's amateur players perform, creating the illusion of a theatre for the on-stage audience, and as a screen behind which the body of Horatio is hidden in preparation for Hieronimo's sudden revelation of it after the tragedy has been performed, creating an interesting stage problem for the players and off-stage audience at the Rose in 1592 (the date of its first performance). In the scene before the curtain is 'knocked up' Isabella stabs herself and dies. Philip Edwards, the editor of the Revels Plays edition, says that Isabella must somehow be got off the stage in order for Horatio's body to be concealed behind the curtain (Span. Trag. 109). D. F. Rowan suggests an ingenious solution:

Many editors have noted the absence of an "exit" for Isabella, or any attempt to remove her body after her suicide . . . the omission of the "exit" is not accidental; indeed it is the clue which solves the riddle. The arbour is placed on the fore-stage for Isabella's attack and suicide. It dominates the scene and she enters the arbour to destroy it, stabs herself, sinks to

the floor and dies within the arbour. Hieronimo immediately enters and "knocks up the curtain" covering the arbour and the body. The actor playing Isabella, the mother, is resurrected into the dead body of Horatio, a metamorphosis theatrically striking and thematically satisfying. (122-23)

The use of the curtain not only provides the spectacle expected in a court performance, the illusion of a theatrical space set up in a room at court, and an on-stage action of theatrical preparation for a performance, but also an immediate solution for what might have been a blocking problem in the main play.

While the players who reside at court might have technical difficulties with their productions, their audiences, with their arguments in hand, are generally well behaved. The same cannot be said for the audiences of the amateur players who bring their entertainments to the court. These players do not have elaborate settings for their productions and rely on the splendour of their costumes and the audience's sympathy. The Princess in Love's Labour's Lost and the Duke in A Midsummer Night's Dream agree that what willing unskilled amateurs lack in art they make up for in pleasure, both in giving and receiving:

Prin. That sport best pleases that doth least know how.

Where zeal strives to content, and the contents

Dies in the zeal of that which it presents;

Their form confounded makes most form in mirth,

When great things labouring perish in their birth. (V.ii.512-16)

Duke. I will hear that play;

For never anything can be amiss

When simpleness and duty tender it. . . .

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:

And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect

Takes it in might, not merit. (V.i.82-92)

Other members of the court audience, however, are not as willing to make allowances for the players' shortcomings. Nathaniel, as Alexander the Great in the Nine Worthies pageant, is put out by the audience's interruptions and cannot finish his speech. Holofernes, as Judas Maccabaeus, is also 'put out of countenance' but he does not leave without reprimanding the audience: "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble" (V.ii.621), he tells them. Armado, as Hector, refuses to be put out. "Peace!" he says to Dumain, and later to Longaville, "Sweet Lord Longaville, rein thy tongue" (V.ii.648). Armado is finally stopped by Costard who, in his performance as Pompey the Great, is more than willing to converse with the audience and cannot be put out by their comments. Costard the clown shares this trait with Bottom the weaver. Even though the audience's constant interruptions put Moonshine out of his part, and in frustration he paraphrases his speech, Bottom, as Pyramus, always has a ready answer:

The. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyr. No, in truth sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me' is Thisbe's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall.

You shall see it will fall pat as I told you: yonder she comes.

(MND V.i.180-85)

Quince and company's play is chosen by Philostrate, Theseus's Master of the Revels, as one of several to be offered to Duke Theseus for him to choose for his entertainment after supper, and the setting for their performance would probably also be chosen for its suitability. As Glynne Wickham has noted, entertainments, such as an interlude like Pyramus and

Thisbe, which followed a banquet were often performed in a chamber adjacent to the hall where the guests had their meal:

It is important to remember here that the amateur nature of these performances and the social status of the performers themselves exercised its own influence on the nature of the accommodation provided for spectators: for these revels approximated to those organized at a large private house party, designed for the enjoyment of the guests and not for the benefit of servants and social inferiors. (EES 2.1: 199)

Bottom knows that they will be performing in the great chamber for he says, Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open; and the moon may shine in at the casement. (MND III.i.52-4)

Their play would be staged with the place of performance in mind. Pageants were normally staged outside, and Armado's "Pageant of the Nine Worthies" is no exception. Richard David and O. J. Campbell suggest that not only the pageant, but also the masque, songs, and dance recollect the entertainments offered the Queen of England on her 'progresses' and as such are extremely suitable for the Princess of France (David xxxvi-vii). The players find their audience in a field outside the court's walls. The King, however, is not in a very receptive frame of mind. He and his courtiers have been shamed in their own thespian attempt by the Princess and her ladies and he is loath to be shamed again by the amateur players. Berowne and the Princess persuade him to receive the entertainment:

Ber. We are shame-proof, my lord; and 'tis some policy

To have one show worse than the king's and his company. (V.ii.508-09)

Armado, following usual court procedure, explains the content of the

pageant to the King before the performance begins. Among the entertainments for the Queen's Progresses was often "a play presented in all earnestness by local talent (often led by the schoolmaster) to be duly mocked by the Queen and her retinue with all the brutality accorded here to Holofernes' pageant" (David xxxvi-vii). The players in Love's Labour's Lost seem not to be as well prepared for their audience's reactions as the players in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The city players in Hamlet, on arriving at the Danish court, are given time to prepare for their performance: "We'll hear a play tomorrow," Hamlet tells them. But the travelling players who arrive at the houses of 'honourable personages' are often required to present their services immediately. After welcoming the player and deciding what play is suitable for his guests, Sir Thomas More says:

Well, my good fellowe, get ye straite together,
And make ye readie with what haste ye may.—
Prouide their supper gainste the play be doone,
Elseshall we stay our guests heere ouer long.—
Make haste, I pray ye. (More IV.i.60-4)

More has his guests' comfort and enjoyment very much in mind. The Lord Cardinal's men, however, are not as prepared as Hamlet's players or those in Taming of the Shrew, because they are missing a beard and More refuses to wait for the player, who has been sent for it, to return. The play must begin without him. The Lord in Shrew can allow the players some time to prepare because he must carry out his deception on Sly before their performance begins. The players in The Mayor of Queenborough are told to "shift" and, in A Mad World, My Masters, to "slip into't as fast as you can" (V.i.69). As the players in these Middleton plays are

preparing to cheat and rob rather than entertain their audiences, they are less careful about learning their words. Follywit performs extempore, an example his fellows follow, and Aminadab explains to Simon, the mayor of Queenborough, after he has been robbed of his purse, that

they are all professed cheaters: they have stolen two silver spoons, and the clown took his heels with all celerity. They only take the name of country comedians to abuse simple people with a printed play or two, which they bought at Canterbury for sixpence; and what is worse, they speak but what they list of it, and fribble out the rest. (Mayor of Queenborough V.i.264-70)

This clerk is more upset by the players' 'fribbling' than their abuse of 'simple people'--complaints common to and of playwrights, both on stage and off stage. Lord Letoy declares he is not a playwright of this kind:

For I am none of those poetic furies,
That threatens the actor's life, in a whole play,
That adds a syllable or takes away.
If he can fribble through, and move delight
In others, I am pleas'd. (Antipodes II.i.20-4)

His players, however, are well prepared and well provided with the necessary costumes and properties. Bassiolo, in The Gentleman Usher, prepares the room for the entertainment the Earl Lasso is presenting Duke Alphonso after supper. Bassiolo takes care to create comfortable seats for the audience and the illusion of theatre in the staging:

Come, strew this room afresh; spread here this carpet.
Nay, quickly, man, I pray thee. This way, fool:
Lay me it smooth and even. Look if he will!
This way a little more, a little there.

Hast thou no forecast? 'Slud, methinks a man
 Should not of mere necessity be an ass.--
 Look how he strows here too. Come, Sir Giles Goosecap,
 I must do all myself; lay me 'em thus,
 In fine smooth threaves, look you, sir, thus in threaves.
 Perhaps some tender lady will squat here,
 And if some standing rush should chance to prick her,
 She'd squeak and spoil the songs that must be sung. (II.i.75-86)

Here is consideration for performers and audience alike. Rushes, of course, were spread not only on the stages of the playhouses but also on the floors of residences from cottages to palaces. In Sir Thomas More, the player who plays Wit is sure the servingman, who gave them "8 angells" as reward for their performance, has deceived them. Wit is determined to discover the truth:

More. In haist to counsell! whats the busines now,
 That all so late his highnes sends for me?--
 What sekst thou, fellow?

Wit. Nay, nothings: your lordship sent 8 angills by
 your man, and I haue lost too of them in the rishes.

More. Wytt, looke to that:-- 8 angells! I did send
 them tenn. (More IV.i.330-37)

Wit's playing in the rushes pays off and, in spite of the lack of a beard for his character, Wit "plaist well ended" (IV.i.341).

Although a player cannot be recognized for his quality by his clothing off stage, costume is an important part of his performance on stage. As Bevington says:

Performers at court could always make use of available stock

costumes for a "scoler," "gent.," "preste," "prentes of London," or "Colyer"; and although troupes on tour must have had far more limited resources than the Office of Revels, they evidently struggled to satisfy their audiences' demand for visual decorum. (93)

Sumptuary legislation and popular fashion undoubtedly had an effect on the players' apparel. Elizabeth I's legislation in 1597 dictated a class hierarchy of who could wear what and when. An actor's costume would distinguish for the audience which character was a lord, which a baron, and so forth. Such apparel was, of course, extremely expensive and the players relied to some degree on gifts from their patrons, from other nobles, or from fellow players in their wills. Much of a playhouse's costume stock was made at either the manager's or the sharers' expense, some was bought from household servants, and some (particularly masque costumes) was received as partial payment for appearances at court. Sets of "masking garments" are marked in the inventories attached to the Revels Accounts as "either 'serviceable' or 'not serviceable' or 'chargeable', but 'fees', and the warrant from the Council instructs the commissioners that cast garments 'being fees incydente to the saide office may be taken by y^e Master of y^e Revelles & dytributed in soche sorte as haue bene accustomed'" (ES 1: 76). Inventories of properties and apparel for the Admiral's Men in March 1598, listed by Philip Henslowe in his Papers, include such items as "j ash coller satten doublett, layed with gold lace," "j shorte clocke of black satten with sleeves," "j read scarllet clocke with sylver buttones," and "j longe black velvet clock, layed with brod lace black" (118-19). Henslowe also lent players money for the purchase of materials for costumes and one entry in his

Diary indicates payment to a tireman for making a costume:

pd vnto you ^r tyerman for mackynge of	}	viij ^s 8 ^d	(180)
w ^m kempes sewt & the boyes the 4 of			
septemb ^r 1602 some of			

Thomas Platter's account of his stay in England from 18 September to 20 October 1599 includes this comment about the players' costumes:

The comedians are most expensively and elegantly apparelled, since it is customary in England, when distinguished gentlemen or knights die, for nearly the finest of their clothes to be made over and given to their servants, and as it is not proper for them to wear such clothes but only to imitate them, they give them to the comedians to purchase for a small sum. (ES 2: 365)

Fashion also made it easier for a boy player to portray a lady with conviction and credibility:

Male dress in the period became ornate, elaborate, contrived, and was openly called 'effeminate' by those of more modest tastes. Its attractiveness proved irresistible to women also, who in any case followed a French vogue for female dress, hairstyles and manners which emulated those of young boys. (Jardine 155)

Follywit in A Mad World, My Masters, when he is disguising himself as a woman, makes the point that fashion for men and women is identical above the waist, so that all he needs is the "lower part of a gentlewoman's gown, with a mask and a chin-clout" (III.iii.77-8) to complete his disguise. As for the upper body, says Follywit,

Why, the doublet serves as well as the best, and is most in fashion. We're all male to th' middle, mankind from the

beaver to th' bum. . . . I should have a couple of locks behind; prithee, lieutenant, find 'em out for me, and wind 'em about my hatband. Nay, you shall see, we'll be in fashion to a hair, and become all with probability; the most musty-visage critic shall not except against me. (III.iii.103-10)

Once the boy player had established his female character with the audience, a page-boy disguise would not confuse 'her' identity. W. Robertson Davies says of Shakespeare's heroines who assume male disguise that the playwright "allowed the boy actor to impress the figure and character of his part upon the audience before anything was demanded of him in the way of action" (49) and even though there are many instances in Shakespeare's plays "in which the female characters make remarks which might be taken as drawing attention to the fact that they were played by boys . . . this does not happen until they have been thoroughly established in the minds of the audience as women, and a conviction of this kind, when once it has become a part of the play, is difficult to disturb by a mere passing phrase or action" (Davies 57-8).

Ben Jonson, in Cynthia's Revels, makes clear how important costume is to the player when, in the induction, three boys are quarrelling over who should play the Prologue: "I plead possession of the cloak," says one. They decide to draw lots: "But will you not snatch my cloak, while I am stooping?" says he who has to make the cuts of straw. The third player, who loses the draw, decides to play a critic, "lend me thy cloak," he begs of the player who won the draw, who replies, "Soft, sir, you'll speak my prologue in it" (Ind.7, 19, 95-6). Vincentio, in The Gentleman Usher, suggests that it will be hard for Medice to play his part well, "for one unlearn'd" (I.i.234):

Vin. I mean untaught, my lord, to make a speech

As a pretended actor, without clothes

More gracious than your doublet and your hose.

Alph. What, think you, son, we mean t'express a speech

Of special weight without a like attire? (I.i.236-40)

Bassiolo, the gentleman usher, reminds his amateur players that costumes are not all there is to playing a role:

Hence, ye brats.

You stand upon your 'tire, but for your action

Which you must use in singing of your songs

Exceeding dexterously and full of life,

I hope you'll then stand like a sort of blocks

Without due motion of your hands and heads

And wresting your whole bodies to your words. (II.i.168-74)

"Visual decorum" must be seen in the physical body of a player and not only in the clothes which dress the body.

That the audience was more likely to associate the costume with the role than with the player is demonstrated by Ann Jennalie Cook. In her book, The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, she records an occasion when Queen Henrietta desired a repeat performance of a university play. The costumes and properties were sent from the university to be used by her own players at court (116). The player in Hamlet, however, is proof that an excellent actor needs neither setting nor costume to move an audience. But for the most part the audience and the actor prefer the effect setting and costume can bring to a performance. For, as Donald Lupton said in 1632, "Time, place, subject, actors and clothes either make or mar a play" (qtd. in Wilson 166).

What then is the effect of setting and costume on the player characters and their audience? Alvin B. Kernan suggests that Shakespeare's opinion was similar to Lupton's: the theatrical situations and players Shakespeare portrays in his plays, although inferior to his own situation with a professional company in a London theatre, do image the public theatre for which he wrote. And, Kernan continues, these situations "make it clear that Shakespeare was profoundly sensitive to the fact that the wrong kind of actors, productions, and audiences could destroy a play, no matter how good the text itself might be" (Magician 80). Bottom and company share the fate of an ill-mannered audience with Armado, Holofernes and company; but, as Richard David has pointed out, such behaviour was acceptable and expected for entertainments of the kind the well-meaning amateurs offer. The players in Hamlet have no choice of the material they present. The effect that the player's speech, done without settings or costumes, has on his audience and the effect the Murder of Gonzago, complete with setting and costumes, has on the highly critical court audience are evidence of the players' ability to move the feelings and not just the tongues of their audience. Domitia in The Roman Actor is not affected so much by the appearance of Paris as the lover, with his false tears on his cheeks, as by her own cunning in thinking of the device. But, even though Caesar does not share her feelings, she is totally moved by Paris' performance, while Paris uses the costume and text to help him experience the role of the disappointed lover and produce real tears. After the performance, Domitia is in love with the role Paris portrayed, while Paris, his "borrowed ornaments put off," is himself again. In The Gentleman Usher, Pogio, the nobleman's nephew, cannot persuade Fungus, a servingman, to change costumes with him, even though Pogio's costume is

more suitable for Fungus's part. "Keep it," says Poggio, finally, "for perhaps I'll play / My part as well in this as you in that" (II.i.151-52). Poggio's audience do not notice the discrepancy in his costume. "O, master broom-man," says Alphonso, "you did passing well" and Vincentio adds, "Ah, you mad slave, you! You are a tickling actor" (II.i.310-11). Lasso, in whose house the performance takes place, calls for more lights and music when the entertainment is ready to begin. In the town halls candlelight was provided for the players to perform by, in private chambers light is supplied for the convenience of the audience rather than of the players. When the actors' performance is over, the lights are withdrawn with the guests or monarch when they leave the chamber. Lasso invites Alphonso to "a homely banquet to close these rude sports" and Bassiolo, his usher, calls out, "Bring lights; make place" (II.i.307-08). Sir Thomas More interrupts the play because his guests' banquet is ready and he tells the players to "prepare against we come" after they have eaten. He exits with his guests calling for "Lights there, I say!" (IV.i.288). When Claudius rises, bringing The Murder of Gonzago to a halt in Hamlet, he says, "Give me some light. Away" and Polonius follows, calling for "Lights, lights, lights" (III.ii.263-64). The player characters would, of course, be left in enough light for the playhouse audience to see the stage clearly but the removal of the extra lights would create a verisimilar appearance of reality.

The players would, undoubtedly, achieve verisimilitude with an appropriate change in acting style when, in the role of the player, they were called upon to perform a variety of entertainments. Performance in a large hall or court chamber would call for expansive gestures and greater vocal projection. Even in the relative intimacy of the public or private

theatre, where the player's more natural acting style would be appropriate for any role, the use of a more formal or excessive acting style would indicate the playing place and occasion of the entertainments within the plays. One of the fundamental problems of the Elizabethan theatre, as Neil Carson points out, was "the discrepancy between the actor's ability to create a realistic illusion of psychological truth and the stage manager's failure to provide a similarly convincing stage environment" (37). Using their ability, the players could, with the help of costume, lights, and the on-stage audience, create through their roles of amateur and professional players the illusion of a 'convincing stage environment.'

As M. C. Bradbrook says:

Players had used to be scornfully termed chameleons rather than comedians; but the Protean art sustained its integrity by tension between manifold styles: between Shakespeare and Jonson, and Jonson and Middleton, between the Red Bull and the Inns of Court, between all of these playwrights and theatres and the Court rituals, or the civic triumphs. ("Shakespeare and the Multiple Theatres" 104)

The Renaissance player's integrity is on display in the staging of the player characters' entertainments.

AUDIENCE

The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst
are no worse, if imagination amend them . . . If we
imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they
may pass for excellent men. (MND V.i)

A player may perform extempore or he may perform the work of a playwright, but he cannot perform without an audience. Acting without an audience is rehearsing, not performing—a point which the rehearsal of The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon makes clear. Sir John Eltam arrives at Skelton's door and asks him to "Sende for the rest, that now we may rehearse" (line 20). The dumb show is rehearsed and then Skelton asks for it to be repeated so that he may explain it. After his explanation, Skelton says, "The manner and escape you all shall see." "Which all, good Skelton?" asks Sir John. "Why all these lookers on," replies Skelton, "Whom if wee please, the king will sure be pleas'd" (lines 108-10). The players do not have to pretend that the play is not a performance after Skelton's official acknowledgment of the presence of an audience. Who were these 'lookers on,' who were and are still so important to player and playwright? What was the relationship between the player and these people, whom poet and player tried so hard to please? And what kind of imagination was demanded of the audience to allow the players to "pass for excellent men"?

Until recently, many critics assumed that the public playhouse audience was mainly made up of "the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise" (Hamlet III.ii.11-2) and other "common sort / Of thickskin'd auditours" (Histrion-
Mastix III). Ann Jennalie Cook demonstrates that the greater part of a playhouse audience comprised the well-educated privileged classes. The

privileged playgoers belonged to the upper echelons of the social classes of gentlemen, citizens, and yeomen. William Harrison, a contemporary observer, described "four sorts" of people in England: "gentlemen, citizens or burgesses, yeomen, and artificers or laborers" (qtd. in Cook 12). "The privileged were distinguished not only by rank or profession but also by a certain style of life" (Cook 17). Those who were not born gentlemen could become members of the privileged class while being educated at Oxford, Cambridge, Inns of Court, or Chancery. The fourth sort referred to by Harrison would be unable to attend the theatre regularly because they would either be working or, if unemployed, too poor. "The fourth and last sort of people in England are day laborers, poor husbandmen, and some retailers (which have no free land), copyholders, and all artificers, as tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, brickmakers, masons, etc." Also included in this sort are "our great swarms of idle servingmen" (qtd. in Cook 13). A player who acquired the coat-of-arms of a gentleman presumably rose to become a member of the privileged class; although Sir William Dethick was removed from his post as Garter King of Arms in 1605 for, among other charges, "granting of arms to unfit persons" (qtd. in Cook 39). One of these 'unfit persons' was "Shakespear ye Player" (qtd. in Cook 39). The privileged professionals who might have attended the theatre (besides the gentlemen players who went to the theatre to work) would include advocates, clerics, teachers, military officers, and an occasional physician (Cook 17). And the performances were held at a time most suitable for these privileged people: "in the best leisure of our life, that is between meals, the most unfit time either for study or bodily exercise" (Webster 89). Although the professional players were financially independent of their patrons and protectors, they had

to be available to play anywhere at any time. William Prynne, one of the great attackers of the stage, asked in Histrion-Mastix (1633), "Why doe men send for Stage-Players to their houses?" (qtd. in Cook 110). Such men would be barons, 'honourable personages,' or gentlemen of even higher rank, such as the King. Andrew Gurr, quoting evidence recorded in Alfred Harbage's Shakespeare's Audience, reveals that when, in 1602, the City Fathers investigated the playhouses under the direction of the Privy Council to restrain "the inordinate resort and concourse of dissolute and idle people" (ES 4: 333), they discovered "not only . . . Gentlemen, and servingmen, but Lawyers, Clarkes, country men that had lawe cawses, aye the Quens men, knightes, and as it was credibly reported one Earle" (Gurr 197). If the public playhouse audience was for the main part uncomprehending 'groundlings,' then either the player of Hamlet was insulting his audience (which he would hardly do considering his financial dependence upon their good will) or the player and playwright were sharing with the audience an ironic joke against the detractors of the theatre.

The Renaissance audience may not have been 'dissolute and idle' but they were, certainly, hard to please. The many complaints, made by playwrights and spoken by the players, of the diversity of their audience's taste are evidence of the variety of people attending performances in the playhouses.¹⁰ The playhouses themselves also required a change in the convention of audience participation in the drama. The Morality plays involved the audience as actors in the play--they played Mankind and were directly addressed by the central characters. The Tudor interludes called for more separation between actor and audience because the central characters were less symbolic of universal vices and virtues and the audience was no longer able to identify completely with the characters

that appeared before them. Anne Richter suggests this change in the relationship between actor and audience also came about because of the professional player's secular intrusion into the spiritual drama:

Professional actors brought into Morality drama, already troubled by the pressure of new emotions and preoccupations, an alien idea of the player as a creator of pleasure and diversion. (29)

The Mystery plays remained unaltered in "their firm closely knit structure and clear relationship of actors and audience" (Richter 29-30), but they eventually disappeared. The reality invoked by the audience's participation in the Morality plays, which were concerned with both secular and spiritual matters, was broken down by the player even before the "Morality moved into the banqueting-hall" (Richter 31):

It was hardly surprising that in the hands of the professional players, men who depended for their evening meal upon the collection taken up at the afternoon performance, the reality possessed by the audience should transform itself into a consciousness of the importance of people watching a play, people to be amused and flattered, diverted and entertained.

(Richter 30)

In the banqueting-halls the players came to the audience, but in the playhouses the audience came to the players.

The audience in the playhouse in the late sixteenth century was constantly reminded through the use of prologues, inductions, epilogues, and references within the plays themselves where they were, how important they were, and how hard the playwright was trying to please them:

This audience could no longer be regarded as an actor, in the

medieval sense, but neither could it be entirely ignored.

Elizabethan dramatists were still obliged--and privileged--to associate their patrons with their characters, to define the relationship of the real world, represented by this ubiquitous audience, with the illusory country of the play. (Richter 55)

Using the metaphor of the world as a stage, the playwrights could offer their heterogeneous audience a reality they could all comprehend. They all knew that they were watching players perform on a stage and that they were sitting or standing around the stage inside a playhouse. "Sit in a full theatre," says John Webster, "and you will think you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many ears, while the actor is the center" (88). The player belonged to the real world of the audience. And yet, at the same time, the player, as a player character or any other character, also belonged to the play world. The Renaissance audience was, in this way, capable of what Bethell calls "dual consciousness" (86). They could apprehend the real world and the play world simultaneously.¹¹ Yet, after 1600, with the advent of the boys' companies in the private playhouses and the popularity of the masques at court, further changes in the nature of the illusion created required changes in the participation of the different audiences in the different playing places.

As none of the player characters perform before an audience in a public playhouse, it is impossible to examine the actor/audience relationship shown in the plays; but, as Hamlet indicates, the men and boys' companies were competing for the same audience. In 1610 the King's Men were performing at the Globe and Blackfriars and, Andrew Gurr suggests, there is evidence in the prologues of later plays that "the Blackfriars audiences did not altogether forsake the King's Men just because they

moved to the Globe and were producing their plays with public theatre appurtenances" (204-05). So, if the audiences in the public playhouses also attended the private playhouses, what were the differences between the playing places?

The most conspicuous difference was probably the disposition of the audience. At the Globe the spectators surrounding the stage were in the cheapest places. At the Blackfriars the witty and the elegant were closest, the poorer folk furthest from the stage. (Gurr 205)

James Shirley in the 1630s said that at the Globe the players need to "break our lungs" to be heard on "our vast stage" (qtd. in Cook 135) over the noise of the spectators "in your pennie-bench Theaters . . . cracking nuttes" (Dekker, Satiromastix IV.ii.53-4), while at Blackfriars, the audience sit quietly and listen (Cook 135). The Citizen and his Wife in Beaumont's The Knight of the Burning Pestle do anything but sit quietly and listen! They insist on changing the name and plot of the play about to be performed and when the Prologue says that their demands cannot be complied with because all the players already have their parts, the Citizen pushes forward his apprentice, Ralph, to play the part of the grocer. They sit on the stage among the gentlemen, chattering and commenting throughout the play. As Walter Burre said, the play has "the privy marke of Ironie about it" and Jackson I. Cope, in his book The Theater and the Dream, supposes that "for those who missed the irony, it must have been a confusing theatrical experience indeed" (196). The social hierarchy established in the seating of the audience in the private playhouse is, in Beaumont's play, completely overturned.

The Knight of the Burning Pestle was apparently not favourably

received in 1607 when it was first performed. Gurr proposes that the audience comprised more citizens than Beaumont imagined and they construed the play as a straight citizen play rather than a burlesque (200). Cope allows that the first audience seems to have missed elements of the satire, which include "satire upon city chauvinism in general," upon the "dramatic manifestation of public bad taste: the meandering romance transferred to the scenes and machines of the stage," and upon "the thespian urge of the unsophisticated" (197-98). Cope also suggests that Beaumont was satirizing "those who are caught up in the 'realistic' aspect of drama [and attacking] the more 'sophisticated' assumption that drama is all artifice" (200). Obviously, not all members of the audience at the private (and probably the public) playhouses were capable of 'dual consciousness.' Some felt a greater need than others to participate with the players in the play:

But in a play, it would appear, only the actor plays. Appearances deceive. The spectator plays or "does" (Anglo-Saxon plegian, "to exercise, bestir, or busily occupy self") through the mechanism of identification. For the identification to be made, however, the actor must be real to the spectator, the actor in his role must in some way be like the spectator. The mechanism is a function of the reality principle and is the principal mechanism of tragedy. But the spectator plays or "makes believe" with the actor through the complementary mechanism of dissociation: the spectator enjoys the play because it is an illusion. This mechanism is a function of the pleasure principle and is the principal mechanism of comedy. Thus there are two ideas in the "idea of a theater": reality and illusion, or, recalling the

etymology of play, doing and playing. (Nelson 6)

I quote Nelson at length because in The Knight of the Burning Pestle, Beaumont blends different mechanisms with comedy, tragedy, and romance all framed in a theatrical setting. The boy playing Ralph becomes an actor playing a grocer (the identity of the Citizen, George, in the audience). The 'grocer' Ralph then becomes part of a romance similar to Don Quixote, although Burre swears "it is his elder above a yeare," and Ralph is finally told to "come away quickly, and die, boy!" (V.iii.129-30) by George. The boy actor complains: "'T will be very unfit he should die, sir, upon no occasion, and in a comedy too" (V.iii.131-32), but George and his wife, Nell, insist. After an extremely long death speech, which George applauds as "a pretty fiction, i'faith," and an agonizing death, Nell tells Ralph to "do your obeisance to the gentlemen, and go your ways" (V.iii.188-89). Nell never forgets that the Knight is her apprentice Ralph. She instructs Ralph during his performance and demands certain actions to be performed for her to display Ralph's acting talent and yet she is taken in by the illusion created by the other players. She believes the barber is a giant and, when Jasper beats Ralph, she is ready to take Jasper's father, Master Merrythought, to court. George, who appears to be equally confused about what is real and what is 'make-believe,' tells her, "I have found out the matter, sweetheart; Jasper is enchanted; as sure as we are here, he is enchanted . . . " (II.iv.128-30). Reality and fantasy are fused because, although George and Nell are surely there, they are really actors. But the actors playing George and Nell are "like the spectator." They are watching the play on the Blackfriars stage, while the audience are watching them playing spectators.

It was, however, this 'mechanism of identification' which horrified

the detractors of the stage and its players. Phillip Stubbes in The Anatomie of Abuses criticizes the theatre for the bad examples it shows its audience:

Do they not maintaine bawdrie, infinit folery, & renue the remembrance of hethen ydolatrie? Do they not induce whordom & vnclennes? nay, are they not rather plaine deuourers of maydenly virginitie and chastitie? . . . these goodly pageants being done, euery mate sorts to his mate, euery one bringes another homeward of their way verye freendly, and in their secret conclaues (couertly) they play the Sodomits, or worse.

(ES 4: 223-24)

Thomas Nashe in Pierce Peniless (1592) refutes this argument:

. . . and as for corrupting them when they come, thats false; for no Play they haue, encourageth any man to tumult or rebellion, but layes before such the halter and the gallowes; or praiseth or approoueth pride, lust, whoredome, prodigalitie, or drunkennes, but beates them downe vtterly. (ES 4: 239)

Thomas Heywood in An Apology for Actors (c. 1608) praises the actor's lively performance for its effect upon the audience:

. . . what English blood, seeing the person of any bold Englishman presented, and doth not hugge his fame, and hunnye at his valor, pursuing him in his enterprise with his best wishes, and as beeing wrapt in contemplation, offers to him in his hart all prosperous performance, as if the personator were the man personated? so bewitching a thing is lively and well-spirited action, that it hath power to new-mold the harts of the spectators, and fashion them to the shape of any noble and

notable attempt. (ES 4: 251)

William Prynne in Histrion-Mastix (1633) finds the actor's art contemptible because acting is "grosse hypocrisie. All things are counterfeited, feined, dissembled; nothing really or sincerely acted" (qtd. in Worthen 19).

Yet Prynne contradicts himself when, like other members of an audience, he confuses the 'personator' with the 'man personated':

There is no difference at all between a foole, a fantastique, a Bedlam, a Whore, a Pander, a Cheater, a Tyrant, a Drunkard, a Murtherer, a Divell on the Stage (for his part is oft-times acted) and those who are such in truth, but that the former are farre worse, farre more inexcusable than the latter, because they wilfully make themselves that in sport. (qtd. in

Worthen 20)

Worthen says that "Prynne's antipathy to acting stems from the actor's falsification of his identity" (20). George and Nan in The Knight of the Burning Pestle were both taken in by the illusion of the actors' 'falsification of identity' and convinced of the 'reality' of the actor Ralph's feigning. In Bartholomew Fair, Ben Jonson satirizes the Puritan argument against the theatre as the "schoole for all wickednesse and vice to be learned in" (John Northbrooke, ES 4: 198), where players defy the 'Law of God,' which "forbids men to put on womens garments" (Stephen Gosson, ES 4: 217). The Puritan, Zeal-of-the-land Busy, attacks the "heathenish idol" at the puppet show because it is "such as are your stage-players, rhymers, and morris-dancers" (V.v.5, 9). The playwright, Leatherhead, is asked if he has nothing to say "in defence of thy quality," and he replies:

Faith, sir, I am not well studied in these controversies between the hypocrites and us. But here's one of my motion,

Puppet Dionysius, shall undertake him, and I'll venture
the cause on't. (V.v.30-33)

Busy agrees to debate with the Puppet Dionysius, "because his calling,
his profession is profane":

Busy. Yes, and my main argument against you is that your are an
abomination; for the male among you putteth on the apparel of
the female, and the female of the male.

Pup. You lie, you lie, you lie abominably.

Cokes. Good, by my troth, he has given him the lie thrice.

Pup. It is your old stale argument against the players, but it
will not hold against the puppets; for we have neither male
nor female amongst us. And that thou may'st see, if thou
wilt, like a malicious purblind zeal as thou art! (V.v.86-94)

In his zeal, Busy believes the puppet to be a stage-player--he is taken
in by the theatrical illusion and is "confuted."

The use of player characters and plays and masques within plays
involves the audience directly in the action of the play as they identify
with the on-stage audience. Both John Orrell and Maynard Mack see the
dramatic illusion created in the Renaissance plays as a series of receding
planes (Orrell 72; Mack, "Engagement and Detachment" 281), while Bethell
defines the effect of plays within plays as "planes of reality" (39).
Shakespeare's Hamlet and A Midsummer Night's Dream are prime examples of,
what Mack calls, "the play as an artful composition made up of receding
planes" (281). In Hamlet,

almost everybody is engaged in some sort of 'act' and seeks
to be 'audience' to somebody else. Conversely, if we sit
looking down with detached superiority on the lovers watching

Bottom's play in A Midsummer Night's Dream, because they in turn look down with detached superiority on the antics of Pyramus and Thisbe without realizing that they are watching the very image of their own antics the night before, we are forced by Theseus's remark about the best in this kind being but "shadows," and the worst no worse "if imagination amend them" . . . to understand that there is another play afoot, in which we are actors as well as spectators, and embraced by a still larger irony than our own. . . . ("Engagement" 281)

In Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, the planes recede even further as Hieronimo's play is performed for the audience in the Spanish court, which is being played in turn under the watchful gaze of the ghost of Andrea and his not so watchful companion, Revenge, who are being watched by the spectators in the theatre. What Mack calls 'engagement and detachment' and what Orrell (using Brechtian terms) calls 'involvement and alienation,' gives the Renaissance audience the chance to participate both actively and passively in the performances in the public and private playhouses.

The relationship between the actor and his audience in the court masque was somewhat different. As Righter says,

The Jacobean masque not only acknowledged the sovereignty of the spectators; it actually represented an extension and glorification of their world. . . . Even before the masquers descended to dance with the company, it was obvious that no real barrier divided the stage from the place where the audience sat. (183)

What happens to the players in a masque can directly touch the audience, as in Women Beware Women, when the Duke is also murdered as he watches

and tries to follow the masque's argument. In many of the revenge plays, for example The Revenger's Tragedy and Antonio's Revenge, which use masques, the masquers shatter the illusion they have created to commit murder. The very purpose of the masque is set in contrast with the event witnessed by the theatre audience. As the masquers move forward to join the audience, they celebrate not "unity, concord and harmony" (Bradbrook, Elizabethan Comedy 221) but revenge and death. In The Spanish Tragedy, Hieronimo has to step out of his character in the play-within-the-play to explain the events the audience has just seen, while Vindice and Antonio can make physical contact with their audience and remain within the convention of the masque. Inga-Stina Ewbank confirms this distinction:

It is above all the taking-out, with its intermingling of stage audience and performers, that distinguishes the masque-within-a-play from the play-within-the-play and gives the former quite different dramatic possibilities from the latter. (411)

Shakespeare's different use of the masque's dramatic possibilities in The Tempest is noted by Bethell and Righter. Prospero complicates the expectations of the audience on and off stage by his employment of 'spirits' as players. E. M. W. Tillyard points out that on "the actual stage the masque is executed by players pretending to be spirits, pretending to be real actors, pretending to be supposed goddesses and rustics" (qtd. in Righter 181; Bethell 40). Instead of the intermingling of stage audience and performers, the players vanish, ideally, though not really, leaving the audience confused as to what is real and what is illusion. The celebration of "the unity of actors and audience" (Righter 183) never takes place. Prospero explains:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,

As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
 Are melted into air, into thin air:
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on; and our little life
 Is rounded with a sleep. (IV.i.148-58)

Righter says that as "Prospero's explanation reaches its end, the audience in the theatre seems to lose its identity. Life has been engulfed by illusion" (182), and this is due, in part, to the use of the masque, where "the audience stands squarely in the centre of the illusion" (183). Bethell believes that Prospero's speech asserts "the existence of an eternal order behind the relatively trivial and impermanent phenomenal world, as the 'real' world exists in comparative stability behind the shadow world of the theatre. . . . The final organisation of Shakespeare's experience is thus functionally related to the dual consciousness of play-world and real-world, characteristic of Elizabethan playhouse psychology" (41). Was the audience engulfed by illusion or did they remain detached, standing squarely in the centre of reality? In the playhouse, the audience would be prepared to use their "imaginary forces" to "piece out the imperfections" of the theatre's finances and machinery used to simulate the spectacular effects of the masque while, at court, the funds available would allow such perfection in scenic effects that would invite awe and wonder but probably little imagination. And yet, in The Tempest, the identity of

the players is so indefinite (Prospero does not step out of character even in the Epilogue) that the audience might not be sure that the usual playhouse relationship between actor and audience existed. "Reality in this domain of the play dissolves and is lost in a confusion of dreams and shadows . . . " (Richter 180-81). The Renaissance dramatists seem to have successfully used the masque to break down the actor/audience relationship in the plays.

The plays written for the children's companies required less imagination of the audience for the creation of dual-consciousness, because of the obvious disparity between the child actors and their adult characters, and more, for the audience to be able to identify with the characters on stage. Shapiro suggests that the private theatre audience wished to dramatize itself:

Many Renaissance aristocrats believed they were expected not merely to be noble but to act nobly, to dramatize their nobility In the private theaters, opportunities for self-dramatization probably attracted members of the upper classes who felt their social status to be precarious: either old-line aristocrats struggling to maintain their standing; or gentry, nouveaux riches, and young men from the inns of court striving for higher status. (Children of the Revels 69)

The audience characters and player characters in the plays were used by the playwrights to pacify the audience and keep their attention:

When one of these self-referential passages reminds spectators that they are watching actors on a stage, it also reminds them that they are spectators in a playhouse. Membership in a private-theater audience . . . carried with it the flattering

illusion that one was a participant, however indirectly, in a form of courtly entertainment. . . . From a commercial viewpoint, it hardly mattered whether a spectator came to the private theaters to watch the illusion created by the dramatic action or to nourish his own illusions about his social status. Whereas self-reference in adult plays can sometimes strengthen the illusion created by the dramatic action . . . self-reference in children's plays invariably exposes the artificiality of the play world and emphasizes the reality of the spectators' vision of themselves. (Shapiro, Children of the Revels 108-09)

The spectators would not be offended by the playwrights' parodies of audiences in plays, such as The Knight of the Burning Pestle, and inductions, such as those of The Malcontent and Cynthia's Revels, because the boy players were obviously not 'real' spectators.

The plays written for the adult companies at the public playhouses between 1590 and 1609, when the King's Men took over Blackfriars, show the aristocratic audiences mocking the amateur players and respecting the professionals, yet always participating in some form or other. In A Midsummer Night's Dream and Love's Labour's Lost, the audiences laugh at the amateurs' attempts at casting--over-casting in one and miscasting in the other. The lovers in Dream fail to see themselves in the characters of Pyramus and Thisbe as presented by Bottom and Flute and are amused by the players' attempts to present a wall and moonlight in human form. Lacking imagination themselves, the players make no allowances for the audience's imagination and consequently neither actor nor audience succumbs to the power of illusion during the play sequence but remains firmly in the reality of their vision of themselves. In Love's Labour's Lost, the King

and his followers have no compassion for the players, who are struggling with roles alien to their own characters. But in this court audience, whose inability to distinguish between appearance and reality is shown in their own futile attempts during their masque to woo their ladies by the outward sign of their favours only, the imagination needed to bridge the gap between the player's appearance and his assumed role is lacking.

Hamlet, Sir Thomas More and the Lord in The Taming of the Shrew, however, are also actors and understand something of the actor's craft. The Lord knows that Bartholomew, his page, once "dress'd in all suits like a lady" (Ind.i.104), "will well usurp the grace, / Voice, gait, and action of a gentlewoman" (Ind.i.129-30). And he plays the part of one of 'Lord' Christopher Sly's servants himself. The Lord is not as sure of Sly's ability to play a member of the audience and he warns the players not to "break into some merry passion" (Ind.i.95) if they should find Sly's behaviour odd. The First Player replies: "Fear not, my lord, we can contain ourselves, / Were he the veriest antic in the world" (Ind.i. 98-99). The First Player in Hamlet is also warned not to mock Polonius, who has shown that he can be moved by exterior displays of passion when he stopped the player continuing his performance of the Pyrrhus speech. Hamlet, on the other hand, who considers himself a judicious audience member, delights in the player's art of feigning passion and, yet, is taken in by the appearance of Claudius's act of praying. The playhouse audience discover that Claudius was performing not doing only after Hamlet has failed to act:

Clau. My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.

Words without thoughts never to heaven go. (III.iii.97-8)

As Peter Holland has observed, Hamlet can recognize all the facets of an

actor's technique, and, in his own grief for his father's death, reject them. "For him, costume, gesture and speech are merely symbols, empty signifiers" (Holland 52); but, even while Hamlet is denying "the trappings and the suits of woe" (I.ii.86), he is using them.

Hamlet's performance as an actor is confusing for his audience. In the theatre, communication between actor and audience depends upon the audience's understanding of the actor's performance, which, in turn, embodies certain universal signs. "Communication," says Holland, "breaks down if the verbal and non-verbal signifiers are so individualized as to be incomprehensible" (52). Holland suggests that Hamlet represents a new, more naturalistic style of acting, while the players represent an older, more formal style. This "world of the new acting" gives the audience a problem "in distinguishing feigning from reality" (Holland 53). A problem which Hamlet as an audience has. Because he "suit[s] the action to the word" he cannot distinguish the difference between doing and performing. The "purpose of playing," he says, is to hold "the mirror up to nature"; but playing is not reality and, as Hamlet tries to explain to the court, the art of feigning cannot denote truth:

'Tis not alone . . .

all forms, moods, shapes of grief,

That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,

For they are actions that a man might play;

But I have that within which passes show,

These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (I.ii.77-86)

Hamlet does not underestimate the power of illusion, however, and he uses the play The Murder of Gonzago to "catch the conscience of the King" (II.ii.601).

The play-within-a-play was used for various reasons: to show the reaction of the spectators on the stage, to add depth to the play and a semblance of realism, and (the argument generally accepted in defence of the stage) to arouse moral feelings of virtue, which lead to corrective behaviour, or of guilt, which lead to confession and retribution. The dumb show and play in Hamlet are used for all these reasons.¹² The dumb show allows the playhouse audience to watch the action of the play so that, during the play itself, they can listen to the words and watch the audience on stage. Of the players and The Murder of Gonzago Holland says:

The travelling players' acting style is old-fashioned, appropriate to the material that they perform. For their play . . . is only too plainly old-fashioned. It is nothing but show, an entertainment not a confusing representation of reality. . (54)

While, by contrast, the play Hamlet "offers us an excess of reality. . . . The Murder of Gonzago is nothing but its own performance. It limits acting; Hamlet wilfully extends it" (Holland 54). The play-within-a-play in Sir Thomas More is also 'nothing but its own performance,' a performance in which More participates as an actor. Arthur Brown sees the introduction of the actors' play The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom, which serves no function in the plot, as

a scene of comic relief between the more serious business of the threatened rebellion and the approaching trouble with the king--[but] it does illustrate clearly More's interest in the drama and in acting; in this type of 'personal chronicle play' any facet of the life of the main character is legitimate material for the dramatist. (39)

Sir Thomas is modest about his own performance, even though he "spake Lugginsses parte almoste as it is in the very booke set downe" (IV.i.300-01). But then the role of "Good Councell" is close to More's own nature, unlike the role of active revenger to Hamlet's introspective nature.

Audience members' identification with a role, however, does not always bring about the expected outcome. In The Mayor of Queenborough, Simon, the tanner elected mayor, has the player who plays the clown removed by the officers and he decides to play the clown himself. Simon tells his audience: "I'll teach thee to understand to play a clown; thou shalt know every man is not born to it" (V.i.84-5). The second player warns him that "my part is so written, that I should cheat your worship if you were my father . . . [for] the part has more knavery in it than when your worship saw it at first" (V.i.213-18). Simon tells him to "do thy worst [and] do it quickly" (V.i.224-26), which the player cheater does. He throws meal in Simon's face and escapes with his purse. Not only is Simon made to look like a fool, but one of his audience, the Puritan Oliver, who was forced to watch the play as a punishment, is highly entertained. The irony of this sequency would not be lost on the play-house audience. In The Roman Actor, the attempt by Paris and his fellow players to cure Philargus of his avarice, by showing him a play about a sick miser who repents being offered a chance to live and "make true vse / Of what my industrie purchas'd" (II.i.390-01), fails. After the performance, Caesar asks Philargus,

Thou wretched thing, hast thou seene thy sordid basenesse?

And but obseru'd what a contemptible creature

A couetous miser is? dost thou in thy selfe

Feele true compunction! with a resolution

To be a new man? . . .

Phil. Pray you giue me leaue

To dye as I haue liu'd. I must not part with

My gold, it is my life. I am past cure.

Cae. No; by Minerua thou shalt neuer more

Feele the least touch of auarice. Take him hence

And hang him instantly. (II.i.425-39)

Caesar's cure was not quite the one Paris and Parthenius, Philargus's son, had in mind, nor the one that conformed with the usual argument in defence of the drama's moral purpose. The poet, playing the Prologue in the play-within-a-play in A Jovial Crew, offers the stage audience "a plain piece of action, short and sweet; / In story true . . .". Oldrents snaps, "True stories and true jests do seldom thrive on stages" (V.i.306-08). But Oldrents is proved wrong. He is shown the story of his own folly, with most of the characters played by their 'real' counterparts. Oldrents' daughters play the daughters of the Lawyer, who in the play "personates [Oldrents], as near as they can set him forth" (V.i.337). Before the end of the play, Oldrents says:

I must commend their act in that. Pray thee, let's call

'em and end the matter here. The purpose of their play is

but to work my friendship, or their peace with me; and they

have it. (V.i.388-91)

It did not take much imagination for Oldrents to recognize his own true story, which certainly thrived on the stage at the house of Justice Clack, a man with no compassion for actors; 'that is to say, strolling players; that is to say, vagabonds' (cf. V.i.252-53). The relationship between actors and audience is clearly not as straightforward as contemporary

attackers and defenders of the stage would have us believe and the playwrights and players obviously recognized that their audience could be highly sophisticated with enough imagination to allow the players to "pass for excellent men."

If we believe the reactions of audiences on the stage in the plays, then we can believe that the actors on the Renaissance stage were able "to perform the same action, and lead the same lives, as in the real world" and "somehow disclose [as Hamlet does] a deeper reality than that of the plane of most of our conscious living" (Eliot 10; cf. ACTING - TECHNIQUE). The technique needed for an actor to be able to do this is similar to the technique demanded of a modern actor. And the problem audiences had distinguishing between doing and performing, reality and feigning, was similar to the problem facing modern audiences. The audience could challenge the power of illusion and stand resolute in their acknowledgement of no other kind of reality than their own, or they could give in to the actors' art of making appearances seem real. They could imagine themselves part of a court entertainment, for instance, while comprehending the reality of the playhouse environment, or they could be totally engulfed in the illusion created by the performance. The theatre was and is a place where actors wield power over the minds of their audience and where the audience carries the fate of the actor in their purse.

THE ROLE OR FUNCTION OF THE PLAYER CHARACTER

If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction. (TN III.iv)

I have suggested that the relationship between the actor and his audience in the Renaissance was similar to that of the twentieth century, as was the player's acting technique. Was the relationship between the player and the playwright similar? The playwright needed and still needs players to interpret his work for his auditors—the player has always been the intermediary between playwright and audience. In the sixteenth century players were often the owners, or at least part owners, and managers of the theatre. The playwrights were the players' employees. It was as a player that Shakespeare made his fortune and acquired his coat-of-arms. In the twentieth century, the power in theatre lies with directors and administrators. The advantage that players had over playwrights in the Renaissance theatre, however, is not born out in the plays. The playwright might have player characters rail against him in the inductions to his plays, but this is a technique used to draw the audience into a participatory role in the dramatic experience. Much as the players used the playwright to dress up old plays or write new ones for them, so the playwrights used the player character as a tool to serve several creative functions in their plays: to make an "improbable fiction" a possible reality, to show the audience the nature of the playwright's art, to explore the problems of art versus nature or illusion versus reality, and to stress the importance of the player and, by association, the playwright and audience to society. The players are, after all, "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time" (Hamlet II.ii.520).

In 1590 the Elizabethan age was at its height. The Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588, the economy and government were strong, important geographical and scientific discoveries had been made, and the humanistic thought of the Italian Renaissance was spreading through England. But the age was not all glory:

The long war with Spain . . . brought unhappy economic results . . . a decline in public morals. . . . The last years of Elizabeth's reign were marked by faction at court as well as by declining honesty. . . . [P]eople got what they could, marriage was a business arrangement, great officers of state did not hesitate to accept gratuities. London was full of sharpers out to fleece the unwary. (Willson 312-15)

We have seen the effect of Elizabeth's laws on players and playwrights and the effect of government's fear of plague and riots on theatrical performances. When James I brought theatre completely within the control of the court, the players and playwrights found themselves caught between King and Parliament—a clash which was to have a profound effect on England and its theatre. James was a man of many contradictions: he wanted to rule well but refused to commit himself to the work involved, he considered himself extremely wise and yet was highly susceptible to flattery, he hated war and violence and was by nature timid but he was bold in hunting. James's court gave the appearance of great wealth but Elizabeth had left the country's finances in an unstable condition and any money James acquired he spend immediately (Willson 335-36). Critical interpretation of contemporary documents by scholars such as David Willson provide a history of the English Renaissance age and, similarly, skilful interpretation of dramatic texts by professional actors bring the play-

wright's reflection of history to life. It is the device of the play-within-a-play that gives a play its own social and historical context.¹³

The plays and masques within the plays show the contradictions and tensions of the Renaissance age in much the same way as, for example, the metadramatic qualities of Tom Stoppard's plays reveal the tensions of modern society. They are fictions within fictions which verify the artificiality and illusory nature of the play while simultaneously making the play seem natural and real. A. B. Kernan sees Shakespeare's plays within plays as a way of setting up mirrors in which to catch a reflection of Shakespeare's thoughts about his own art:

The mirrors agree in reflecting continuing concern about the effectiveness of actual theater in achieving the results of which it is ideally capable, and they thus suggest that Shakespeare was always troubled by the problems of theatrical production. But the images in the mirrors are complex, and rather than showing a romantic artist's complete despair with his medium, they reflect both a wary concern for the dangers of production and a continuing positive belief in the enormous power of theater in general, and of his own plays in particular.

(Magician 65)

In Love's Labour's Lost and A Midsummer Night's Dream, Shakespeare shows inept actors and unmoved audiences and in The Taming of the Shrew the audience goes to sleep! However, in Hamlet, the actors are skilled professionals and the audience, at whom the playwright's words are aimed, is suitably moved; but the cause is ambiguous. Claudius could be moved either by the play or by Hamlet's pointed choric interruptions. By the time The Tempest was written the actors in the internal performance are

ideal but not real and the audience is a mixture of those who are willing to be moved and instructed and those who refuse to be affected. Kernan adds,

It is important to note that in these plays art is never seen as some abstract thing far removed from life but always as a force working directly and immediately upon life, changing the world by reconciling opposites and transmuting a difficult reality into the forms that man desires. (Magician 80-1)

The ideal form of performance is one which balances reality and "imaginative pretense in such a way as to manifest the purpose of playing itself, the channeling of nature by art into harmonious and satisfactory patterns" (Kernan, Magician 81). The responsibility for such a performance lies with both the actor and the audience and, while the artist (the playwright) strives for the ideal, he rarely achieves it in the plays within plays. Kernan agrees with Righter's thesis that Shakespeare became dissatisfied with theatrical limitations on his art and suggests that

the full potential of the playwright's art . . . would have to be [realized] in some pure theater of the imagination, free of the limitations of real actors, stages, and audiences, and such a theater could only be created within the play itself.

(Magician 135)

Prospero's island in The Tempest comes close to being an ideal theatre but even there reality intrudes in the shape of Prospero's 'audience.' Mack sees the play-within-a-play in Hamlet working directly upon reality—the real audience in the theatre watching the play. The play scene creates "a situation that tends to dissolve the normal barriers between the fictive and real" ("World of Hamlet" 253). There are so many levels

of playing--with 'real' players and 'real' characters who are all playing --and so many levels of audience--with the theatre audience watching the stage audience watching each other watching the players--that we might ask, with Mack, "Where . . . does the playing end?" ("World of Hamlet" 253). In this fusion of real and fictive, opposites are reconciled and the "improbable fiction" becomes the possible reality.

The playwright's art reflected reality--life--and strained against similar tensions. Hamlet, the Renaissance man, sees "the modesty of nature" in his mirror's reflection, the decorum or ideal which he instructs the players to imitate, but when he looks round the court he sees nothing but pretense and hypocrisy, the excesses of nature:

[T]he theater to Hamlet, to Shakespeare, and to the audience becomes a symbol for making unseen realities seen, for exposing the secret places of the human heart and objectifying them in a way without which they would be unbearable to look upon. We see into ourselves, as it were, through a looking-glass. Thus the mirror image is connected in Hamlet's mind with acting and, by extension, with other forms of art which penetrate hypocrisy and pretense. . . . (Forker 217)

The playwright uses the player characters and his art to show the theatre audience the reality of their world in acceptable, "harmonious and satisfactory patterns." Conventional dramatic forms are used to show, by contrast, corrupt and uneasy reality. The old-fashioned speech patterns of the Pyrrhus speech and The Murder of Gonzago contrast with the varied, rich speech patterns of Hamlet--the deliberately formal verse creates in opposition a seemingly natural speech, which seethes with ambiguities. The playwright can control and structure his play with his art but man

cannot control or structure his life, his destiny. The Player King tells his audience:

But orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown:

Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own. (III.ii.205-08)

What Hamlet learns in the course of the play is that he is an actor not a playwright. He might be able to 'fribble' a line or two, as he does when he sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths, but he cannot change the outcome of the play in which he performs. The Renaissance belief in the order of the universe is shaken but stands firm. Verisimilitude and decorum, ideals to which the Renaissance player adhered, can, however, "conceal truth as well as reveal it" (Kernan, Magician 110):

Withdraw one step, as Hamlet constantly invites us to, and Hamlet itself along with all Shakespeare's other political plays become to the world in which Mary Queen of Scots is a double plot to Elizabeth, Essex's followers arrange to have Richard II played in the city at the time of his rebellion, and Elizabeth manages her suspenseful production of naming James as her successor only at the climactic moment, what "The Death of Priam" and The Murder of Gonzago are to the play-world of Hamlet. (Kernan, Magician 111)

Shakespeare's comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream also attends to the tensions experienced by the Renaissance man and artist. David P. Young says that art might give imaginative experience consistent and coherent shape, but the audience and the actors might not share the artist's vision. "Even well-meaning reasonable men like Theseus do not understand [poetry's

value] because they do not know how to value the imagination" (141):

Once again, by comic means, Shakespeare has broken down an orthodox Renaissance dichotomy to force a reexamination of human knowledge and experience. The inquiry touches epistemology, psychology, and ethics, but it also reaches, by a deliberate gesture on the poet's part, into the realm of the aesthetic, so that the questions raised by the play turn back by an imperceptible process to become the play itself. . . . It is a happy kind of metamorphosis that allows the poet to meet the strictures against his art by making art of them.

(Young 141)

Shakespeare has used comedy and tragedy to entertain and instruct his audience. He has brought his theatre world onto the stage to show the audience the reflection of the theatre's reality and, on another level, the world's reality.

Other playwrights also use their art and players to show life's tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions in a theatrical context. Hieronimo, in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, cannot expect justice from a corrupt court and, therefore, takes the law into his own hands and arranges for the execution of his son's murderers during a play. Kyd's play, however, begins with the ghost of Don Andrea sitting down with Revenge to see Balthazar, who slew Andrea in battle, slain by Andrea's beloved Bel-imperia. Andrea soon becomes a spectator and Kyd's audience become engrossed in Hieronimo's tragedy:

The moment [Kyd] substituted, no matter how confusedly, the revenge for a murder which had been portrayed before the audience's eyes, he gave them characters with whom they could

more directly sympathize and a situation which they could appreciate as an incident from real life. (Bowers 268-69)

The play-acting deaths which the Spanish court thinks it sees in Hieronimo's play turn out to be real deaths:

Hie. Haply you think, but bootless are your thoughts,
That this is fabulously counterfeit,
And that we do as all tragedians do:
To die today, for fashioning our scene,
The death of Ajax, or some Roman peer,
And in a minute starting up again,
Revive to please tomorrow's audience. (IV.iv.76-82)

The playwright Hieronimo had taken care that Bel-imperia should be spared the death called for in the original story, but she ignored Hieronimo's rewrites and played out her role to the end:

Hie. Poor Bel-imperia miss'd her part in this,
For though the story saith she should have died,
Yet I of kindness, and of care of her,
Did otherwise determine of her end. (IV.iv.140-43)

Don Andrea and Revenge are satisfied with the outcome of events and Kyd's audience's sense of ethics is satisfied with the penalty Bel-imperia and Hieronimo inflict on themselves. The after-death justice which Andrea is allowed to distribute to those who died in the play and the play-within-the-play does question, however, the Renaissance belief in God's final judgment. The ghost of Andrea, like the ghost of Hamlet, brings "a vision of reality from the dead" and the "true appearances of things are revealed by phenomena from outside the world of Elsinore [or the Spanish court], by the Ghost[s] . . . and by the players who bring another vision of truth

from art" (Forker 217). The playwright does not change reality but alters the appearance of reality. In The Maid's Tragedy, Beaumont and Fletcher insert a wedding masque, performed by unknown characters in the main play, who are presumably actors. The playwrights "have seized on the assumptions of the traditional marriage masque--pre-nuptial chastity, bridal bliss and royal integrity--and contrasted them with a corrupt reality" (Ewbank 418). The masque ends with the King hurrying Amintor and his bride Evadne off to bed:

Take lights there!--Ladies, get the bride to bed.--

We will not see you laid.--Good night, Amintor,

We'll ease you of that tedious ceremony;

Were it my case I should think time run slow.

If thou be'st noble, youth, get me a boy

That may defend my kingdoms from my foes. (I.ii.279-84)

The irony of this speech lies in the fact that Evadne is the King's mistress. The players of the masque are not recognizable as player characters but their roles indicate their status or profession and the playwrights use them to point out the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Philip Massinger relies heavily on the player for the success of The Roman Actor. His protagonist is an actor and their combined talents are tested in three plays-within-the-play. As Dieter Mehl explains, the first play is "staged to exercise a salutary moral effect on some hardened sinner in the audience, but the device fails . . . ," the second play "illustrates how a play can be mistaken for reality," and the third play is used as "a means of revenge" ("Forms and Functions" 50-1). In the first play, although Paris performs well, the audience is unmoved and remains detached from the performance; this detachment costs Philargus,

the audience, his life. In the second play, Domitia is moved so much that she mistakes the play "for actuality . . . [and] lays bare her deepest emotions" (Mehl, "Forms and Functions" 51); this involvement eventually costs Paris his life. In the third play, "Paris's acting and life are blended into a real tragedy" (Sandidge 26). When Domitia offers herself to Paris, he is torn between his attraction to her as a woman and his allegiance to her husband as his patron, friend, and ruler. He tries to refuse her but fails. The death Paris expects when Caesar discovers them is not, however, immediately forthcoming. Caesar asks for a performance of The False Servant, the plot of which is similar to that played out by Domitia, Paris, and Caesar in the main play. The boy plays the part of the Lady, Paris the False Servant, and Caesar the Injured Lord. When the moment comes for the Lord to feign the act of killing the False Servant, Caesar actually kills Paris. The difference between the use of the play in The Roman Actor and The Spanish Tragedy for revenge purposes is that Caesar uses the drama to honour Paris in death, while Hieronimo uses the drama to conceal his intent from his victims. What appears to happen on the stage is usually feigned but in these cases what should be feigned is done in reality.

The player and his performance can often blur the distinction between illusion and reality, or art and nature, while at the same time enhancing it. Of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Young says, several oppositions such as "that between art and nature as well as subsidiary distinctions such as feigning in poetry and truth in other forms of knowledge, and the illusion of the stage and the reality of the world . . . do not trouble this play" for they are used to strengthen and enrich "what is in effect a self-vindicating art" (151). The players, Bottom and company, fail

with their illusion, their play, because they "do not understand how the natural and the artificial can be made to interact. Their attempts at verisimilitude are clearly unrealistic, and their artistic flights are disastrously divorced from their audience's sense of what is natural" (Young 150). The players' performance is artificial, conventional, and unnatural to the stage audience. By contrast, the performances of the members of the stage audience seem natural and realistic to the theatre audience. "I never may believe / These antique fables, nor these fairy toys" (V.i.2-3), says Theseus, and we may agree with him; yet he is himself an antique fable, a toy from Shakespeare's imagination or fancy, and the audience find the reality of Theseus's court fading to illusion. In the epilogue, Puck, one of the shadows, reminds the theatre audience that they have been watching a play or were they dreaming? And, moreover, is this shadow an actor or a spirit? The reasonable answer is an actor, but Theseus was a reasonable man and he did not believe the lovers' story, which the audience actually saw enacted before them. The players have confused the audience's knowledge of reality and illusion and carried them outside the play world into the real world. In Hamlet, says Forker, "real actors pretend to be actors entertaining an actor-audience, who, in turn, entertain a real audience, who are metaphorically actors on the world's stage and hence 'walking shadows' of an ultimate cosmic reality, of which they are but dimly aware" (216). Audience become actors and actors become audience—what seems real is really seeming. The actors on the theatre's stage merge with the actors on the world's stage. When the players appear in their roles as players, the distinction between the character and the actor disappears. It is the audience's recognition of this distinction which creates their 'dual consciousness.' Without dual consciousness,

the audience can no longer be sure of what is fiction and what is real. Of course, the audience know, as they leave the playhouse, that they have been watching a play, but the merging of art and nature, which the playwright achieves with the player characters, causes feelings more of empathy than sympathy with the characters on stage and a realization that circumstances similar to those brought out in the play could occur in the real world. As Holland says, "the problem of meaning, particularly meaning in action, with which Hamlet grapples, forms the basis of all social behaviour" (60).

The study of social behaviour in theatrical terms did not end with the Renaissance. Erving Goffman uses the analogy of the theatre in his development of what the sociologists call the dramaturgical model, which views "social life in terms of actors performing to audiences, wearing masks, using props and, finally, reading the reviews" (Himelfarb and Richardson 98). Hamlet shows us how important acting is in social interaction and the skill required to be a good actor or audience. Hamlet preaches moderation but does not practise it: as an audience, he mistakes seeming for reality with Claudius's act of praying; as an actor, in his mother's closet, he mistakes his role of son for that of preacher.¹⁴ To be a good actor is to match inward feeling or motivation with appropriate outward show or gesture. To be a good audience is to blend reason with imagination and not be fooled by masks and props---the outward show. Action in society requires a knowledge and understanding of the mores and values of society and reaction recognizes and admits certain conventions and rules. In the corrupt world of Hamlet, any action involves the actor in this corruption:

[Hamlet] himself, before he finishes, has become a player, has

put an antic disposition on, has killed a man—the wrong man—has helped drive Ophelia mad, and has sent two friends of his youth to death, mining below their mines, and hoisting the engineer with his own petard. He had never meant to dirty himself with these things, but from the moment of the ghost's challenge to act, this dirtying was inevitable. It is the condition of living at all in such a world. (Mack, "World of Hamlet" 258)

The players' arrival at Elsinore is a direct result of theatrical conditions in the city and Shakespeare's reference to the war of the theatres reflects the conditions of the real world in the play world. "Mimesis, then," says Egan, "the ability to reflect reality in an effective image that codifies and communicates the artists' vision: this is what Shakespeare defines as the utmost power of drama in Hamlet" (11). Hamlet, by watching and listening to the players perform, eventually learns to be a good actor himself.

As Hamlet learns by example, so can any audience. The moral value plays is that they teach by example.¹⁵ The players and playwrights are the instructors and the audience, the students. In his Apology, Heywood lists the morals and instruction to be gained from watching players of tragedy, comedy, morals, histories, and pastorals:

For, or because Playes are writ with this ayme, and carryed with this methode, to teach the subiects obedience to their King, to shew the people the vntimely ends of such as haue moued tumults, commotions, and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as liue in obedience, exhorting them to allegiance, dehorting them from all trayterous

and fellonious stratagems. (16)

The Puritans used this argument against plays and players. Stephen Gosson writes in Playes Confuted in fiue Actions:

If any goodnes were to be learned at Playes it is likely that the Players them selues which committ euery sillable to memory shoulde profite most . . . but the dayly experience of their behaiour sheweth, that they reape no profit by the discipline them selues. (ES 4: 216)

Kernan suggests that, in Hamlet, Shakespeare shows that it is not the subject matter of the play that reflects society "but the theatrical mode itself that finally serves 'to hold the mirror up to nature . . . '"

(Magician 106):

What it shows, however, is not some certain truth, some clear moral which can be taken home by the audience--if only they ever really heard all there was to hear--but a condition of life like the theater itself, ambiguous, changing, transient. (Magician 106)

Richard Brome's The Antipodes, the content of which are "low and homebred subjects" (Prol.25), uses Lord Letoy's house as a theatre. The prologue to the play-within-the-play, spoken by the actor Quailpipe, assures the relatives of the patient Peregrine that they will be spectators of a comedy which in no way touches upon their lives:

This play shall no satiric timist be
To tax or touch at either him or thee
That art notorious. 'Tis so far below
Things in our orb that do among us flow,
That no degree, from kaiser to the clown,
Shall say this vice or folly was mine own. (II.v.16-21)

but as an actor who, unwittingly and maybe unwillingly, participates in the condition of theatre--the "ambiguous, changing, transient condition of life."

EPILOGUE

Our aime is glorie, and to leaue our names
To after times. (The Roman Actor I.i)

"Renaissance drama," says Michael Hattaway, "like classical drama, imitated types or universals." And, he asserts, "Shakespeare felt that it was the player's task to realize the type rather than the individual" (77). Renaissance critical theory, says Doran, "taught that the persons of fiction and drama should be represented in their typical aspects. . . . To mark a character with the signs of some class to which he belongs . . . is a simple way to give him consistency and propriety and a certain kind of verisimilitude" (231-32). But Sir Thomas Overbury defined a character as "a picture (reall or personall) quaintlie drawne in various collours, all of them heightned by one shadowing" (92). The audience, Bevington tells us, did not expect type-casting nor did the actors' troupes practise it (87). Gurr effectively states that when "one attempts finally to draw up a composite picture of the characteristics of the Shakespearean actor and the main features of his trade, one is confronted with an impressionist landscape flecked with many colours, the outlines of which are nowhere distinct" (110). What, then, are the main features of the player character found in the Renaissance drama? Is he represented in his typical aspects and does he adhere to the ideal of decorum?

Almost immediately the amateur and the professional part company. The amateur, who belongs usually to another profession, is unable to identify in any way with the role he is playing if it is alien to his nature. Falstaff, in 1 Henry IV, needs external aids to help him play the passion of a king: "this chair shall be my state, this dagger my

sceptre, and this cushion my crown" and "give me a cup of sack to make my eyes look red, that it may be thought I have wept, for I must speak in passion" (II.iv.373-81). Bottom needs costume to assist his performance of a romantic hero and Nathaniel is simply "o'erparted." In a role akin to his nature, however, the amateur can be ideal. Sir Thomas More extemporizes as Good Counsel and makes up lines similar to those in the script; Simon, the mayor of Queenborough, plays the part of the fool more successfully than the player and then cannot stop—"unseasonable folly!" snaps Hengist, King of Kent; and Bottom, with his ass's head, plays the fool naturally in Oberon's jest. The professional, on the other hand, is able to perform any role with conviction. The First Player in Hamlet needs no sack to help him "speak in passion" and weep, and Paris, the Roman actor, weeps in his role of a disappointed lover even though he is already made up to look as if he has wept. The professionals in Hamlet play kings and queens with as much conviction as Claudius and Gertrude, the Lord in The Taming of the Shrew is already convinced of the players' ability to personate, and Paris in The Roman Actor plays a doctor, lover, and false servant with equal ability.

The similarities between amateur and professional lie in the player's acting skill or ability and the audience's reception of his performance. A good actor, whether he is amateur or professional, playing before an audience willing to suspend their disbelief is more likely to succeed than a bad actor playing before an audience either unwilling to use their imagination or using it too much. Kernan makes this distinction between the amateurs Falstaff and Hal in Shakespeare's Henriad:

Falstaff is a fine actor. . . . But he always has something of Bottom in him, playing his roles too broadly and always ignoring,

eventually fatally, the full dimensions of the reality he imitates and seeks to control by his acting. His pretenses are always parodies and always delightful, but they never quite tell the total truth, and they usually fail to persuade their audience entirely.

Hal is ultimately a better actor, whose performances capture more of reality, and are more convincing, not only in the Boars-head scene or his imitation of Hotspur, but in the various political scenes he plays throughout his life. . . . (Magician 83)

We have seen how Massinger's The Roman Actor and Shakespeare's Hamlet show the different effect a good actor's performance can have on different members of an audience. The amateurs in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Love's Labour's Lost, The Gentleman Usher, and A Mad World, My Masters have no effect upon the lack of sensibility in their audiences, who seem interested solely in their own self-importance; but the professionals in Hamlet, The Roman Actor, and The Antipodes have the ability to move and be moved.

What the good professional player characters reveal is the doctrine of appropriateness. Their speech and behaviour is appropriate to their person, their place, their time, their circumstance, and their purpose. They offer their patrons and rulers obedience and loyalty, their public and private audiences entertainment and instruction, their hosts their services on command, and their playwrights their fulfilment of whatever role or function they are given to the best of their ability. These are characteristics, however, which many of the professional and most of the amateur player characters do not have--their performance skills being far from appropriate for the roles they play. Nor can most player characters be typified or marked by the outward sign of costume. Those who play the

prologue wear the cloak and hat designating their role but, within the plays, the player character has to be identified or heralded for the audience to recognize him. The consistency and verisimilitude of the player character lies in the fact that, like the player of the Renaissance drama, whom he imitates, he is as ambiguous and indistinct a character type as the social class to which he belongs.

NOTES

¹ William Ringler, in his article "Hamlet's Defense of the Players," points out the many references in Hamlet to topical events, statutes, and social and playing conditions of the players.

² W. Reavley Gair also makes this point in his introduction to the Revels Plays edition of Antonio's Revenge, by John Marston (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1978) 16.

³ Histrion, the player, in Poetaster has been identified by Baldwin and H. D. Gray as Augustine Phillips, the manager of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Cf. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, ed., Ben Jonson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941) 9: 558.

⁴ The idea of Field dealing as a character with dialogue about himself as an actor reminds me of M. C. Bradbrook's idea about Burbage, as Hamlet, facing the First Player, made up to look like Burbage, and saying, "Com'st thou to beard me in Denmark?" (II.ii.420). Cf. M. C. Bradbrook, Shakespeare the Craftsman (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969) 129.

⁵ R. A. Foakes' thesis in his article, "The Player's Passion," is that Elizabethan psychology, while not intruding upon theories of acting style, must be taken into consideration.

⁶ Rosenberg is referring to evidence in an article by Geoffrey Tillotson, "Othello and The Alchemist at Oxford," Times Literary Supplement 20 July 1933: 494.

⁷ Somerset also deals with the notion that Shakespeare wrote parts specifically for Armin's acting capabilities and that Armin inspired Shakespeare's creation of wise fool parts.

⁸ For a thorough explication of the Player's speech, cf. Harry Levin's

article in Kenyon Review XII (1950): 273-96.

⁹ Roy Battenhouse suggests that the player makes "damnable faces" to fit "his action to the words he will speak" (14), while Howard Felperin suggests that the player is "exploiting the theatricality implicit in the Vice's role" (47).

¹⁰ David Klein has recorded many of the complaints in his book The Elizabethan Dramatists as Critics (New York: Philosophical Library, 1963).

¹¹ Kernan suggests that both Jonson and Shakespeare present their audiences as actors: "Once an audience's certainty about itself and its world is unsettled . . . and it is forced to consider itself as a group of actors, then it is in the proper theatrical frame of mind, poised between belief and disbelief, to accept the fiction of the play as both real and unreal" ("Audiences" 85).

¹² Felperin's chapter, "O'erdoing Termagant: Hamlet" in his book Shakespearean Representation, deals with the obvious archaism of the play-within-the-play in comparison with the play Hamlet. But Shakespeare, Felperin suggests, does not purge the play of all archaism but uses and subsumes older modes of drama while superseding them (60).

¹³ Kernan quotes Leslie Fiedler's suggestion that the play-within-a-play allows a play to provide a "history of itself, a record of the scruples and the hesitations of its maker in the course of its making, sometimes even a defense or definition of the kind to which it belongs or the conventions which it respects" (qtd. in Kernan, Magician 64).

¹⁴ Felperin makes this point when he explains how Hamlet recasts the closet scene into a morality drama. Gertrude becomes the misguided sinner, Claudius the Vice, and Hamlet the preacher (50-1).

¹⁵ In Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humour, Asper turns actor to try and train the audience with his play. Asper openly scorns the gallant and those with no imagination,

Who (to be thought one of the iudicious)

Sits with his armes thus wreath'd, his hat pull'd here,

Cryes meaw, and nods, then shakes his empty head.

(Greex. Prol.160-63)

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